THE MUSALMAN

By

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Translator's Note

I have hardly anything to add about the purpose of the book which has been adequately explained by the author in the introduction. My labour in rendering it into English would be amply rewarded if this book could be of some help to those who want to bring Muslims closer to the mainstream of National life. But no such effort can succeed without proper realisation of the underlying traits of Muslim life: the duality of its existence which makes its both the components—its Indianness and Muslimness—equally valuable and interdependent. For a Muslim no one component surpasses or nullifies the other. And this is the reason why Indian Muslims have always supported, and shall ever continue to strive for a pluralistic society in which its various segments can legitimately have and are able to retain their separate religio-cultural identities. The efforts of national integration overlooking this basic fact are bound to widen the gulf between different communities instead of bridging it. I hope this slim volume would be helpful in understanding this basic fact of the life and culture of Indian Muslims.

My thanks are due to Mr. Abrar Ahmad Khan for his valuable help in the preparation of the manuscript. I must also thank Mr. Ahsan Jalil who helped me in the correction of the proof.

Lastly, a word about the transliteration of Arabic and Urdu words. The dashes mark the long vowels : ā as in far, ū as in loose, ī as in mean. Two more conventional signs ʿ and ʾ which represent the sounds of Arabic *ain* and *hamza* respectively have been used. Where the two consonants : *ch*, *dh*, *gh*, *kh*, *sh* and *th* have been used. they are to

be sounded together, as, for examply, *ch* in 'church' *sh* in 'ship' and *th* in 'think'. The sound of *gh* resembles *gz* as in 'exact', that of *kh* in like *ch* in Scottish *loch* or the German *ach* and *dh* gives the sound of *th* in 'father'.

October 15, 1972. MOHIUDDIN AHMAD

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INTRODUCTION

Hindus and Muslims are living together in this country for a thousand years. In every city, town and village they are not only next door neighbours, but they are also colleagues and partners in business and trades, schools and offices. They have also jointly participated in the movements launched for the liberation of the country from the foreign rule, and are still co-workers in different political and social organisations; in the railway and buses they can be seen travelling together; but, it is an incomprehensible mystery that they are not even as much acquainted with each other's religious beliefs, customs, tradition and culture as the people belonging to two different lands. What they do know about each other is more often than not a jumble of tittle-tattle and misconceived notions, hearsay and prejudices. Naturally, such a distorted angle of vision, aided and abetted by the malice and prejudice of sectarian propaganda gimmick and distorted text-books of history is bound to produce a perverse and grotesque picture of the other community. The careless glance which men of culture and learning condescend to cast on the basic tenets and beliefs, manners and morals of the other community serves only to confirm their ignorance if not the prejudice harboured by the misguided fanatics. Not unoften the opinions expressed by fairly educated persons about the faith and customs of the other community have to be dismissed with a laugh. The impression gained by the writer of these lines is always confirmed by conversation with the people from every walk of life whom he comes across in the buses and railways during the journeys frequently undertaken by him.

But this is not a matter to be laughed away, it is serious enough to eat one's heart out. We have been living together for hundreds of years but we are still so ignorant of each other ! The responsibility for this does not lie on any particular community; it devolves on both and, particularly, on those who claim to be religious and social workers, patriots and philanthropists. It is they who have as yet made no sincere effort to diffuse correct and unbiased information about the two communities; whatever effort they did make in the past has been inadequate and half-hearted. It has now been accepted on all hands that cooperation, peace and amity between the two peoples cannot be obtained without a true understanding of each other's religion and culture: every group, faction and community comprising the nation has of necessity to know the beliefs, customs, traditions, observances and taboos of the other people. One has to understand what are the dominant traits or the cultural pattern of another community, what are the social, spiritual and moral values and beliefs and tenets dearer to them more than their own life and progeny, what they need to lead a contented and peaceful existence and what are their inherent predilections, inner streaks of mind and heart, temperament and disposition which have to be taken into consideration for any purposeful dialogue with them. These are the pre-requisites of peaceful co-existence of the different communities living anywhere, but more so in a country which has so long taken pride in its charmful variety of creeds and cultures and has always upheld the principle of LIVE AND LET LIVE. There is a general tendency nowadays to acquire knowledge about the religions and philosophies, cultures and customs, languages and literatures, habits and hobbies of the people living in the far-off lands; universities offer special courses on these subjects; cultural delegations are exchanged and students are encouraged to pursue further studies abroad; but the two people living in India, Hindus and Muslims, are still as ignorant of each

other as the people living in two different countries.

The situation obtaining in this regard is equally harmful to the Muslims as well as to the Hindus and, in the final analysis, to the country and even humanity at large. The deep gulf of prejudice and suspicion divides the two communities; misunderstanding, distrust and prejudice against one another embitter their relations; friendliness and companionship are foreign to them while they lack a genuine understanding, tolerance and respect for the creed and culture of the other people. The country suffers, obviously, in consequence. In these circumstances, the minorities, specially the Muslims, consider it the aim of their constant efforts to preserve and protect their religion, culture and language. Their redoubtable capabilities which have left indelible imprints of their achievements in almost every field--from philosophy and mysticism to architecture and fine arts and from the governance of the country to the common weal of the people—are not being directed to the extent these should have been for the reconstruction and development of the country. Psychologically speaking too, they do need a reassurance that they are not being misunderstood, are relied upon and respected by the sister communities. They have to know that no veils of distrust intervene between them and the majority community, nor are they looked down upon with suspicion and hatred or with a feeling of estrangement. Such a sense of security can only be produced by an awareness that the sister communities with whom they have been living for a thousand years as next door neighbours adequately know them, their merits and failings, their past and present, their creed, culture, customs, observances, rites and festivals. The same applies to the Muslims as well. Their knowledge of the Hindus has of necessity to be more profound and intimate than that possessed by any other people.

A number of works, written by Muslims as well as non-Muslims, describing the attainments of the Muslim era, the

efforts made by the Muslims to give a clean and stable administration to India, to make her strong and great, their cultural heritage and their contribution to the arts and literature of the country already exist. The author ot these lines too penned a book entitled "Indian Muslims" which has since been published in Arabic, Urdu and English.[1] All these works, however, fall within the scope of history and are of interest to the students of history and research scholars. The need of the hour, on the contrary, is of a book dealing with the present rather than the past. Apart from what the Muslims have been in the bygone days, the immediate need is to depict the life of the present-day Muslims—what they now are, irrespective of any consideration whether this is liked by anyone or not. The endeavour should aim at depicting the present-day picture of the Muslims in India without magnifying or concealing any facet of their life or without giving vent to one's own preferences or prejudices. The picture to be so depicted should be a study in still life—a portraiture of life seen through a photograph rather than a decorative painting. It should be factual and not contentious, nor, argumentative. I do not mean to say that the putting forth of one's own point of view or the ventilation of one's creed or philosophy is something undesirable, but a work designed to portray the life of Muslims should better be strictly informative. We already have a good number of such books on Islam as, for example, *Road to Mecca* by Muhammad Asad (formerly Leopold Weiss), *Towards Understanding Islam* by Maulana Syed Abul ʿAla Maudūdi, *Introduction to Islam* by Dr. Hamīd-ullah and *What*

1. The Arabic version is entitled *al-Muslimoon, fil Hind* and the Urdu version as *Hindustani Musalman*. A series of lectures delivered by the author from the All India Radio in 1951, after his return from the tour of Middle Eastern countries, for acquainting the Arabs with the achievements of Indian Muslims, were published in a book from Damascus. Its Urdu and English versions were later brought out by the Academy of Islamic Research and Publications, Lucknow.

Islam Is ? by Maulana Muhammad Manzoor Naomani. These books can easily be had from any library by those who are interested in the study of Islam. But unlike these books, the present work is intended to be an informative book of common interest, written in a simple and unaffected style portraying the present-day life of the Indian Muslims. Not designed to cater for the erudite and philosophic minds, it is meant for those average educated non-Muslims who could not for any reason get themselves acquainted with the way of life of their Muslim brethren, but who now need to be posted with it for satisfactorily discharging their day-to-day work like journalism or carrying out political or social work. I hope this book would be found helpful by them not only in their daily business but also as an incentive for further studies on the subject.

In this book I have kept in view the *Ahl-i-Sunnat wal Jamaʿat*, commonly known as *Sunnīs*, to which belongs the overwhelming majority of the Indian Muslims. This is not because the other sections of the Indian Muslims do not deserve to be mentioned, but that I can authoritatively speak only on behalf of my own sect, i. e., the *Sunnīs*. In other words, I think myself morally bound to present their way of life as best as I can. A similar effort on my part on behalf of other sections would be fraught with the danger of misrepresentation, even though unintentional. Then, there is also no dearth of savants and writers of repute among the other communities of Indian Muslims. I would, therefore, earnestly advise them to pen similar tracts depicting the life of their own brethren. I have, nevertheless, mentioned, wherever absolutely necessary, the differences and distinguishing features of the second largest community among the Indian Muslims i. e. the *Athna ʿAshari* sect or the *Shiʿās* as they are commonly known. If these descriptions are somewhat sketchy, I regret the same but no more space could be devoted to the description of these differing characteristics in this slim volume.

The purpose of this book being to present the manners and customs, observances and the way of thinking of Indian Muslims, the corresponding features of the life of Muslims living in other countries have not been delineated here. However, Islam is a universal religion rooted in the Qur'ān and the *Sunnah*, and, therefore, there is hardly any difference in the basic tenets and religious observances of the Muslims of other countries. Indian Muslims have, on the other hand adopted numerous customs and usages of the land which have been pointed out where necessary in order to identify their indigenous origin.

I have not made it a point to suppress my own ideas, feelings and predilections for this would have reflected an artificial treatment of the subject or, to put it more bluntly, such an endeavour would have been simply hypocritical. Any such effort would have made my writing lifeless and dry as dust. I have, nevertheless, tried to be moderate in expressing my own views on any subject and avoided all references which could even faintly be construed as aggressive or offensive to anyone.

Although I lay no claim to any erudition in writing these pages, still, I am satisfied that its publication may be a humble service to my nation and the homeland. The English and Hindi versions of the book, which ought to have been brought out much earlier, would, I hope, fill in an important gap; and, should be beneficial for the Indians at large, particularly the Muslim community.

I sincerely wish that similar informative books written in an easy and simple style, avoiding philosophical and controversial issues, would be published about the life and culture of other communities, particularly the majority community of India. The ignorance of Muslims about the manner and morals of the Hindus, or, for that matter, of other castes and creeds is as worse as that of the non-Muslims about their Muslim brethren. Hindus and Muslims both have, therefore, to give attention to this urgent task.

Having performed what I considered to be my duty on behalf of the Indian Muslims, I hope that our non-Muslim friends would soon come forward to help in rooting out the present feelings of alienation and estrangement which are largely a product of ignorance of the way of living and thinking of the different communities living in this sub-continent. At least this blind and dark ignorance should not be allowed to disrupt the brotherly relations between the different castes, creeds and communities of our great motherland.

Abul Hasan Ali
Daira Shah Alam Ullah
Rae Bareli.

10th March, 1972.

I

FROM BIRTH TO ADULTHOOD

Birth of the Baby

When a baby is born in a Muslim family, he is first taken to an elder and pious member of the family or a neighbour who repeats the words of the call to prayer (*adhān*)[1] into the baby's right ear, and those of the *iqāmah* into his left ear. The call to prayer and *iqāmah* are essential pre-requisites of the Muslim prayer. The baby, obviously, is completely unaware of this ceremonial chanting but the intention is that he should first hear the name of God and the Muslim confession of faith. It is also customary to place on this occasion a bit of date chewed by some pious person in the mouth of the baby. This custom which has the sanction of the Prophetic Tradition, is intended to sanctify the newly born.

The birth of a baby is, for the Muslim family, a joyful event; the occasion being enlivened by differing customs and ceremonies depending more often on local traditions and the social and economic status of the family. Greetings are exchanged between the relatives who wish good luck to the parents. Another custom peculiar to Indian Muslims but not prevalent among the Arabs or the Muslims elsewhere is the presentation of garments or other articles of dress for the baby by the near relatives, specially from the mother's side. The custom varies from place to place in different parts of the country.

1. For the explanation of these terms, see Chapter V, relating to Religious Observances.

Aqīqa of the Child

The birth of the baby is celebrated by shaving his head and by offering of a living sacrifice. The ceremony known as *aqīqa* or *moondan* is normally performed on the seventh day of the child's birth[1]. If it is not performed for any reason on the seventh day, it can be carried out on the fourteenth or a subsequent day fixed in this wise. Two goats are sacrificed if the infant is a male child, otherwise one is considered enough. The flesh is given to the poor and also distributed among the relatives. There is also no bar to its consumption by the family members and relatives who are often invited to partake the meal at the house of the parents. The *aqiqa* is, however, neither obligatory (*fardh*) nor essential (*wājib*), nor is the sacrifice a duty incumbent on the parents. One can forgo the ceremony if one's means do not permit it.

The usage common among the Indian Muslims is to invite the relatives and friends on the day appointed for the *aqīqa*. The barber is then called in who ceremoniously removes the hair of the baby. Alms are then given in the form of a quantity of silver equal to the weight of the baby's hair or its approximate price. The practice is followed to emulate the Prophet of Islam who is reported to have distributed alms in a similar manner. In certain sections of the Muslims, the family barber, who belongs to one of the serving castes and is attached to the higher-cum-feudal classes, performs *aqīqa* and similar other ceremonial functions. On the joyous occasion of *aqīqa* as well as on functions of similar nature the family barber gets rewards throughout the ceremony, on different pretexts, from the members of the household and the near kins, which constitute a major source of his income.

1. The seventh day performance of *aqiqa* is *mustahab* i. e. a meritorious act liable for reward but the omission of it does not expose one to the risk of any punishment.

Christening of the Child

The infant is normally given his name on the occasion of *aqīqa*, and it is more often proposed by an elder member of the family or a neighbour revered for his piety. Sometimes the parents or the members of family themselves select a suitable name for the child. Indian Muslims prefer to give Arabic names to their children; or, more correctly, like the Muslims elsewhere, names expressing Islamic denomination are adopted so that there may be no doubt about the religion of the child. The Muslim doctors of faith consider the practice beneficial from a psychological view-point and insist on it for maintaining the religious identity of the Muslims. They look with disfavour the practice followed by the Chinese Muslims whose names give no indication whether one is a Muslim or not. There are, any way, no religious injunctions calling upon the Muslims to give any particular type of names to their children except that such names are to be preferred which are expressive of the Unity of God and submission to Him. A great majority of the Muslim names in India and other countries, therefore. is that which has ʿ*abd* (slave) as a prefix of one of the Divine attributes, such as ʿAddullah, ʿAbdur Rahmān, ʿAbdul Wahīd, ʿAbdul Ahad, ʿAbdul Samad, ʿAbdul ʿAziz. ʿAbdul Mājid, ʿAbdul Majeed and so on. At the same time, it is exceptionable to have such names which smack of pride or disobedience. Names, such as. the Malk-ul-Mulūk (King of Kings), Shahenshāh (Emperor) are accordingly viewed with disfavour.

Names of the Prophets and Companions

In giving names to their children the second preference of a Muslim goes to the names of his own beloved Prophet

1. The second part of these names denotes the adjectival names of God, as, for example, *Rahmān* (The Most Compassionate), *Wāhid* (The Lonely), *Wāhid* (The One), *Ahad* (The One) *Samad* (The Eternally Besought of all), etc.

and his distinguished companions and members of the Prophet's family. Another reason for the adoption of these names is to bless and sanctify the baby. In India the names which have Muhammad or Ahmad as one of their component parts abound; sometimes both these names of the Prophet are given to a child who is thus called Muhammad Ahmad; or else they prefer to have Muhammad as an essential prefix even though the child may not have been formally christened by that name on the occasion of *aqīqa*. We, therefore, frequently come across such names as Muhammad Saʿeed, Muhammad ʿAzīz, Muhammad Husain and similar other names. The other names commonly adopted are those of the members of the Prophet's family and his companions. Daughters usually receive the names of the wives and daughters of the Prophet.

An interesting feature of the names of Muslims is that the Prophet of Islam belonged to the Ismaelite branch of the Semitic race with whom the Muslims have ever had a religious and emotional attachment. However, among the descendents of Shem, the Israelites and Ismaelites have had a long-standing fued which continues even to the present times in the shape of differences between the Jews and the Arabs, but this bitterness has never led the Muslims to avoid the names of the Israelite prophets. The Muslim creed of having faith in the prophethood of every apostle sent by God for the guidance of humanity has saved them from falling a prey to the racial prejudice normally engendered by centuries old enmity and hatred between the two nations. There are hundreds of thousands of Muslims in India, as in the Arab countries and the rest of the Muslim world, who have been named after Prophet Is'hāq[1] (Isaac) and his descendants, such as, Yaqoob (Jacob), Yūsuf (Joseph), Daūd (David), Sulaimān (Solomon), Mūsa (Moses), Hāroon (Aaron), ʿIsa (Jesus),

1. The Prophet and the progenitor of the Israelites. He was the step-brother of Ismael, the ancestor of the Arabs.

ʿImrān (Iyokem), Zakariya (Zechariah), Yahya (*John*) among the males and Maryam (Mary), Safura (Sapphira), Aasia and similar other names among the women, who were all Israelites.

Some Undesirable Names

Indian Muslims have also evolved certain names which are peculiar to them indicating local influence of the personality cult as well as undue veneration of the saints. Some ot such common names found among the Indian Muslims often run counter to their belief in the Unity and overlordship of God. One of the foremost articles of the Islamic faith is that God alone is the Provider of sustenance, Bestower of children and the Forgiver of sins but quite a number of Indian Muslim names ascribe these Divine attributes to the saints and the venerated personages belonging to the Prophet's household. Some of such undesirable names are Sālār Baksh, Madār Baksh, Qalandar Baksh, Sābir Baksh, ʿAli Baksh, Husain Baksh, ʿAbdul Hasan, ʿAbdul Husain,[1] etc.

Another significant feature of the Indian Muslim names is that these are usualiy composed of two different names as, for example, Muhammad Hasan, Mahmood Hasan, ʿUsmān Ahmad, ʿAli Murtuza, while the Arabs prefer single names. Wherever the Arabs have composite names, the first name is the original or christen name of the man while the subsequent part indicates the name of his father, the family name or the *laqab* (surname). In Gujarat, Maharashtra and certain southern states of India, Muslims have their first names completed by fhe addition of their father's names.

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1. A number of eminent doctors of faith vehemently object to such names which they consider as un-Islamic. One of the most respected reformers and defenders of Islam in India, Maulana Syed Ahmad Shaheed Barelvi (d. 1246/1830), had changed thousands of such names during his extensive travels undertaken for the spiritual and moral uplift of his co-religionists. (See *Saiyid Ahmad Shahid* by Mohiuddin Ahmad, for the great reformerative endeavour of the 19th Century in India, published by the Academy of Islamic Research and Publications, Lucknow).

There are also certain common surnames of Hindus as well as Muslims in certain southern parts of the country, such as, Deshmukh, Modak, Tankar, etc. which denote either the ancestral village or town or the occupation or office held by one's forefathers under the Indian princes before establishment of British rule in India.

Names of Indian Origin and the Aliases

In India we have names of purely Indian origin too. One or both the portions of such names, normally composite ones, are derived from Urdu, Persian or one of the local dialects, and can be easily distinguished from the more common Islamic names of the Indian Muslims. A few of such composite names are Bunyād Husain, Gulzār ʿAli, Allah Diyā, Barkhurdār, ʿUmar Darāz Beg. There are still other purely indigenous names, such as, Hubdār Khān, Umrao Mirza, Amīr Bāz Khān, Bāz Mīr which are not to be found anywhere else nor is it possible to say how these have come into vogue in certain areas.

Besides the proper name given to a man, there is a custom of having an alias also, by which one is called by the friends and relatives.

Sometimes, however, such an alternative name of a person becomes so well-known that even his intimate friends do not know his christened name. These aliases are very often given either as pet names to the children to be used in familiar affection or are abbreviations of the longer names. Aliases are more in common use in Oudh, particularly around Lucknow. A few of such names are: Naushāh Miān, Piare Miān, Basāwan Miān, Banney Miān, Jī Miān, Naqqan Sahib, Kabban Sahib, and the like.

Circumcision

Another ritual following the Ibrahimic tradition, that a child has to undergo after *aqīqa*, is circumcision or *khatna*. The Arabs have always observed the ceremony of *khatna*

which has also the sanction of practice followed by the Prophet of Islam. Normally the operation is performed by a barber but now-a-days people get the circumcision operation performed in the hospitals where better medical facilities are available. This is also regarded as a festive occasion for the family when friends and relatives are invited to participate in the joyous event.

The Ceremony of Bismillah

Soon after a child is able to speak and comprehend things an elderly and pious person is invited to initiate the instruction of the child. This ceremony, known by the name of *Bismillah*, marks the beginning of the child's education. In families which are economically well-off it is a festive occasion celebrated with pride and pomp. Also known as *tasmia khwānī*[1] and *maktab nashīnī*[2], the ceremony is at places performed exactly after the child attains the age of four years, four months and four days. It is difficult to say if the age fixed for the ceremony has any numerical significance or how it originated, but it has definitely no religious sanction.

The teacher performing the initiation ceremony first asks the child to repeat *Bismillāh-ir-Rahmān-ir-Rahīm* (In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful) and then, after praying God to bless the child with light and learning, formally teaches a few words from a primer of the Qur'ān. In India the preparatory text-book normally used on the occasion is *Qaiʿda Baghdādi*. After the ceremony is over, all those who are present on the occasion invoke the blessings of God for the child, sweets are distributed and the guests are entertained with light refreshments.

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1. Recitation of the name of God.
2. Admission to a seminary.

Beginning of the teaching of Qur'ān

Besides *tasmia khwānī*, there are two more ceremonies relating to the education of the child, which have now seldom an occasion to be performed owing to the changed curriculum and the system of education. The first one of these is gone through when the child begins reading the Qur'ān. On this occasion those five verses of the Qur'ān which were first revealed to the Prophet and are very meaningful and suited to the occasion, are repeated by the child. These are:

"In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.
Read: (O Muhammad), In the name of thy Lord Who createth,
Createth man from a clot.
Read: And thy Lord is the Most Bounteous
Who teacheth by the pen.
Teacheth man that which he knew not[1]."

Completion of the Qur'ān

The second function pertaining to the education of the child is observed when the child has read the entire Qur'ān. It is normally a simple ceremony when sweets are distributed or *sharbet* is served to those present, and a presentation of garments is made to the teacher. In certain places it is also customary to reward the teacher with cash. The ceremony is known by the name of *nashrah*.

Instruction in Cleanliness and Purification

The children are taught, right from the tender age when they begin to speak, to keep their body and clothes clean from dirt and all other impurities. Later on, when they begin formal education, they are told to wash the private parts with water after urination and excretion. Insistence on ritual purification of the child by the educated parents goes

1. XCVI: 1-5.

to instil a sense of cleanliness in the child. It, however, also depends on the surroundings, occupation of the parents and the instruction of the child by the teachers. Parents with a religious bent of mind are generally more scrupulous in this regard.

Instruction to offer Salāt

The children are also taught how to perform *wadū* i. e. ritual ablution necessary for offering the prayers. Boys are encouraged from an early age to accompany their fathers while going to the mosque for prayers. This offers them an opportunity to learn how to perform the prayers and also to cultivate a habit of it. A Tradition of the Prophet directs that the child should be instructed to offer prayers when he attains the age of seven years and admonished for it if he does not get used to it by the age of ten.

Coaching in Etiquettes and Manners

In the Muslim society, the young children are more a responsibility of the mothers than any other member of the family. Educated and cultured mothers always keep an eye on the manners of their children and teach them the rules of courtesy and good behaviour as dictated by the religious precepts. The children are taught to begin every good work as, for example, taking of water and food or shaking of hands, with the right hand and cleansing of the private parts with the left one. They are urged to sit down while taking water and to drink it in three breaths. They are trained to salute their elders first; say *Alhamdu* lillāh whenever they sneeze; begin taking food with *Bismillāh* and offer thanks to God after finishing the meals. The mothers normally make it a point that the youngsters commit to memory some of the smaller chapters of the Qur'ān and also other supplications of daily use. The mothers also try to infuse the spirit of true faith, righteousness and dutifulness into their children through fables and stories of the

prophets and the events related by them from the history of Islam. The constant aim of every well-bred Muslim mother is to make her child virtuous and upright, a believing Muslim and an ideal man. In fact, the importance attached to the family in Islam arises from the duty of the parents to provide instruction to the child not only in what are known as the rights of God i. e., the religious observances and the behaviour in conformity with the norms of morality and religion but also good manners, especially in matters of ettiquete and politeness, and the rights of h;s fellow-beings, for all these form part of the Muslims' faith (*imān*) in Islam

The Fast-breaking Ceremony

Rozah, also known as *saum*, is enjoined by the religious law of Islam as an obligatory observance on every Muslim, but, on the condition that he must be an adult and in sound physical and mental health. But, infatuated with enthusiasm to emulate their parents and relatives the young boys and girls insist on keeping fasts alongwith elder members of the family. The young boys often begin observing the fast secretly or are encouraged by the parents to keep the first fast (*rozah*) at the age of about ten or eleven years. This also being an occasion for family rejoicing, the relatives and friends as well as the chums of the child keeping the fast are invited to a special feast. The ceremony which is called *rozah kushāī* provides another occasion for elaborate preparations being made for the fast-breaking meal, or *aftāri*, which is taken just after sunset. Even the people not in possession of a moderately good income deem it necessary to make special arrangements for such feasts. The ceremony has, in certain places, gradually assumed sufficient importance with the feast of friends and relatives as its central function.

The two essential religious observances, the prayer and fasting, become obligatory on all adults possessing mental and physical faculties and, on the fulfilment of certain other conditions elaborated in the law books, to undertake the

pilgrimage to Mecca (*hajj*) and to pay the poor-due (*Zakāt*). Attainment of the age of majority[1] thus brings a Muslim under the operation of the laws prescribing the permissible and prohibited acts, holds him responsible for his omissions and commissions and renders him liable to punishment in the Hereafter for the disregard of Divine injunctions.

1. For the performance of religious observances, the legal age of majority is 15 years.

II

FROM ADULTHOOD TO DEATH

Marriage is not only a social necessity and a commendable act in the eyes of the religious canon (*Sharīʿat*), it is also one of the landmarks of major significance in the life of a Muslim attaining manhood. Islam does not view with favour any undue delay, unless there are some cogent reasons for it, in the marriage of a Muslim after attaining the marriageable age. It wants to plug the door to immorality and dissoluteness. The religious law of Islam does not prescribe any particular age for contracting marriage, the marriageable age depends on the general physique of a man, his upbringing and circumstances as well as the climatic conditions and customs obtaining in a particular country. It only enjoins that one should enter into wedlock soon after attaining puberty.

Indian Customs adopted by the Muslims

The democratic structure of the Islamic social order still in vogue in other Islamic countries, particularly in the Arabic-speaking lands, has been gradually given up by the Indian Muslims who are guided in establishing matrimonial relationship by the considerations of the caste and family. Preference is given here to the spouse belonging to one's own caste, and within the same caste. to a consort of the same family. This bespeaks of a leaning for racial or blood relationship which is sometimes absurdly insisted upon in the matrimonial union. This obviously owes its origin to the Indian caste system or social

stratification among the sister community,[1] which has so long been scrupulously adhered to by them. In comparison to the Indian Muslims, whose social structure has become a victim of caste discrimination, their co-religionists in other countries would appear to be more broadminded and unfettered by the shackles of customs and rituals. In establishing matrimonial relationships the Muslims of other countries do take into account the social, economic and educational status of the spouses—any marked disparity being looked with disfavour, but the Indian Muslim communities arrogating themselves as *ashrāf* or *shurfā*[2] consider it absolutely essential to unite in marriage only with those who descend from a common progenitor. They overlook the social and moral evils which are produced by such a strict adherence to the social stratification, and have some times to pay dearly for that. The changing social order, economic pressures and the wide diffusion of education among the masses are slowly bringing about a change in the outlook of the people; now greater preference is being given to the economic status, education and the good looks of the couple. This is, of course, a novel experience for the Muslim community as a whole, which is sometimes successful and at times ends in a failure; but, be as it may, the considerations of caste and consanguine relationship are increasingly being relegated to a lower priority.

Marriages within the Family Circle

Contrary to the Hindu custom of solemnising marriages outside the family circle, the Indian Muslims prefer to intermarry within the family, barring, of course, the prohibited degrees of relationships.[3] In certain families the

1. Also the Persians, who had four major classes of the priests, warriors, commoner and the serfs, almost identical to Indian *Varnas*, since the Avestan periods.
2. Both derived from the Arabic *sharīf*, meaning honourable.
3. For details *see* verses IV : 22-36 of the Qur'ān.

marriages between the cousins i. e. the sons or daughters of an uncle or aunt are given preference over other matches, although the practice is now losing ground owing to a variety of reasons.

The Marriage Proposal

There is not much difference between the way marriage proposals are finalised and various other rites in vogue connected with the formal declaration of such an engagement amongst the Hindus and Muslims. These rites also differ form place to place but the observance of the local customs and rituals amongst the Muslims, particularly in the educated and well-to-do families, is not as punctilious as amongst the majority community. On the whole, these observances are on the decline owing to the influence of modern education.

The Islamic Way of Marriage

Islam looks upon the *nikāh* (the contract of marriage) and the connected functions generally known as *shadi* as an austere and simple affair It is, in its view, a social necessity which should be solemnly observed like an act of worship. The Muslim law lays down no specific religious ceremony, nor any religious rituals necessary for the contraction of a valid marriage. Legally, a marriage contracted between two persons possessing the capacity to enter into the contract, is valid and binding, if entered into by mutual consent in the presence of two witnesses. Its only aim is to declare that the couples are not being united in the wedlock secretly or surreptitiously but with the knowledge of all concerned. Islam also enjoins the husband to pay the *mehr* or the dower–money to his wife, treat her with kindness and undertake to support and maintain her in a way suitable to his own means and position in the society. These stipulations cover the injunctions laid down by Islam for contraction of marriage: no more rites or customs were

considered necessary or were in vogue in the early Muslim society. Numerous examples of frugal simplicity in marriages can be cited from the life of early precursors of Islam. Madina had a slender population of Muslims after their migration from Mecca but we find a companion of the Prophet, who was closely related to him and had migrated with him from his ancestral city, contracting marriage without inviting the Prophet to attend the ceremony. The Prophet came to know of the marriage only later on.[1]

Ostentatious Celebration of Marriages

In India, as also in other Muslim countries, the marriages have become the occasions of festive rejoicing marked with rigid and costly ceremonial functions, and a means of ostentatious display of one's pride and pomp. The simplicity of the Islamic form of marriage has not been the only victim of these vain pretensions, it has also often brought in its train untold miseries to the families parading their grandiose nobility. The modern education and economic regeneration of these countries has too been unable to change the current attitude or bring about any reform in these customs. Even in well-educated and religious-minded families elaborate arrangements are made for marriages, guests are entertained lavishly and the houses decorated colourfully. It is not unoften that entirely novel methods are adopted to flaunt the nobility and stateliness of the family and to make a show of its intimate connections with the ruling elite. The marriage is followed by a grand feast to celebrate the alliance, which again provides an occasion for the lavish entertainment of quite a large number of guests. The affair has become too costly, often requiring people to incur heavy debts in order to keep up the

1. A distinguished companion of the Prophet, ʿAbdur Rahman ibn ʿAuf, married after his migration to Madina. The Prophet came to know of it on the next day on account of the scent ʿAbdur Rahman had used. The Prophet then asked him to invite his friends to *valima* or a feast. (*Sahih*).

appearances. These vain pretensions have given rise, not unexpectedly, to a contest in prodigal spending and pompous show of the false vanity and opulence. The Indian Muslims have left their co-religionists in other countries far behind in the festive celebration of marriages.

Music and Dancing

Except in the families which strictly follow the rules of *Shariʿat* or are indoctrinated by the religiously-oriented reformatory movements, the marriage celebrations are invariably accompanied by musical sittings and dancing and amusements meant to amuse and entertain the guests. In such families the marriage is followed and preceded by festive rejoicings; nautch girls and professional dancers belonging to servile classes are invited a few days before the function. In the performances held for the diversion of women the girls of the family also participate alongwith the dancing troupe. The bride is secluded, a few days before the marriage, in a closet and tradition demands her to observe *purdah* even from her nearest kins. The musical sittings are now giving place to the playing of recorded music. The dancing performances too, which were earlier considered an essential part of all festive rejoicings by the feudal lords and grandees are gradually being given up owing partly to economic pressures and partly because of modern education and corrective influence of the reformatory movements.

Local customs in Muslim Marriages

Indian Muslims have adopted numerous rites and customs of the soil which are not to be found among Muslims elsewhere. One of these customs relates to the demand known as *tilak*, made by the bridegroom or his guardian, which has to be fulfilled by the parents of the bride. The custom is not prevalent everywhere in India, nor among the Arabs or the Turks who would even find it difficult to

understand its implications or the sense or spirit behind this seemingly senseless custom. It is not easy to describe the insurmountable difficulties and untold miseries caused by this custom and the obstacles placed by it in the way of finding a suitable match for the marriageable girls in certain places.[1] Similarly, the extensive and lavish arrangements made for marriage feasts are peculiar to Indian Muslims. The exhibition of *jahez*, the clothings and the utensils and the furniture given as dowry to the bride by her parents, which are taken out in a procession, the rites of *rū-numāi* i. e. showing of the face of the bride to the bridegroom after marriage, the *salām* by the bridegroom, contributions by way of *neuta* by the relatives, corny jokes exchanged by the in-laws, and the custom of ceremonial visits paid by the bride and the bridegroom to the house of the other, a ceremony known as *chauthi*, are some of the rites of indigenous origin unknown to the Muslims of other countries. All these rites and customs were perhaps the product of the concept commonly held that marriage is a festive occasion providing a temporary diversion from the cares and worries of daily life, when it is permissible to take leave from moral bindings and other serious pursuits in order to enjoy and amuse oneself. The idea, suited to the local genius, also finds expression in the fairs and festivals of India, which have presented, from the times immemorial, a fascinating spectacle of colourful celebration and an occasion for the reunion of friends and relatives.

The Performance of Nikāh

Before the marital contract of *nikāh* is solemnised the bridegroom is dressed up in a new attire provided by the

1. As these lines are being written, a report has come from Gaya in Bihar, where a Marketing Officer, Syed Muhiuddin, had to commit suicide because he was unable to meet the demands made by way of *tilak*, for the marriages of his four daughters of marriageable age. (Sidq-i-Jadid, 3rd March, 1972).

parents of the bride, and made to sit at a distinguished place in the gathering. In certain places there is also the custom of dressing up the bridegroom with a flowerly veil (*sehra*) and brocade bracelets (*kangna*) which are, however, disliked by those who prefer to follow the precepts of religion. The *nikāh* can be solemnised by any educated Muslim: it is not necessary that the person performing the ceremony should be a *Qazi*. In the bygone days of Muslim rule in India, the magistrates charged with the administration of justice or the Muslim legists, known as *Qazis*, performed this function also. It is, however, preferable under the Islamic law that the father or the *Walī* (guardian)[1] of the bride should himself perform the ceremony as the Prophet of Islam had himself solemnised the marriage of his daughter Fatima with ʿAli. Before the ceremony of *nikāh* is performed, an attorney and two witnesses who are more often near kins or members of the bride's family, repair to the girl to inform her of the marriage to be contracted in lieu of a stipulated dower and to seek her consent. In India, the bride usually keeps silent which is taken as her tacit approval of the proposal made to her. The *Qazi* or the person performing the *nikāh* then recites the *khutba* in Arabic, consisting of a few verses of the Qurʾān and Traditions of the Prophet, and closes the discourse with an invocation of Divine blessings for the couple. Thereafter follows what is called *ijāb* and *qabool* or the offer and acceptance. Normally this consists of the proposal of marriage made to the bridegroom and his acceptance in these words: "Such an one's daughter, whose name is this, is given by me in marriage to you in lieu of such a dower settled on her; do you consent to it?" To this the bridegroom replies in a low but audible voice, "I consent". After it, the *Qazi* and all those who are present there raise their hands to offer prayers for mutual love

1. Under Islamic Law any major male member of the family in possession of sound mental faculties who is also an heir of the girl and allowed to give consent on her behalf is called the *wali*.

and a successful married life of the couple. This invocation is also made in Arabic.

The Address of Nikàh

The address delivered on the occasion of *nikāh* is normally in Arabic but now-a-days it is made up of the Quranic verses recited in Arabic followed by a speech in Urdu delineating the duties and obligations of the married couple. The *khutba* is thus employed to instil a sense of responsibility in the bridegroom and to emphasise the moral-spiritual character of the *nikāh* performed with the sanction of religion, for the benefit of the audience.

Here we are giving a *khutba* delivered on the occasion of a marriage for the benefit of our readers. After repeating the supplications offered on such occasions by the holy Prophet, the *Qazi* continues :

"I betake myself to Allah for refuge from the accursed Satan.

(I begin) in the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

O mankind ; Be careful of your duty to your Lord.

Who created you from a single soul and from it created its mate and from them twain hath spread abroad a multitude of men and women. Be careful of your duty toward Allah in Whom ye claim (your rights) of one another, and toward the wombs (that bare you).

Lo : Allah hath been a Watcher over you.[1]

O ye who believe ; Observe your duty to Allah with right observance, and die not save as those who have surrendered (unto Him).[2]

O ye who believe ; Guard your duty to Allah and speak words straight to the point; He will adjust your works for you and will forgive you your sins. Whosoever obeyth

1. IV : 1.
2. III : 102.

Allah and His messenger, he verily hath gained a signal victory.

"Gentlemen, the *nikāh* does not mean going through a ritual nor is it simply an act of worship or something having the concurrence of the Prophet alone. It is in fact an embodiment of several devotions, acts of worship: not one, but numerous acts of oblation and offering, recognised as virtuous and holy flow from it. It is a subject consecrated enough to be mentioned in the Glorious Qur'ān and the Traditions of the holy Prophet; the Islamic jurisprudence devotes a separate chapter to it; but, alas, it is neglected by the people as no other *sunnah*[2] of the Prophet has ever been ignored. What to speak of the following of these precepts, the *nikah* has become a means to flout the commandments of God, to obey the sneaking whispers of Satan and one's own longings and base desires; a lifeless ritual has it verily become. In truth, the *nikāh* shows us the way how to lead a virtuous life. As you would have marked from the Qur'ānic verses I have just recited–and these were recited on similar occasions by the Prophet too—that the most appropriate and propitious thing worth mentioning on this occasion is the genesis of human race on this earth. It was the single soul of Adam from whom his mate was created, and then they filled this earth with their progeny. Does not the whole of human race furnish a testimony to the mutual love and affection, attachment and devotion of Adam and his spouse? Verily, it is not at all difficult for God to bless the mates who are being united today in a holy wedlock to become one day the head of a large family, the progenitor of a happy and prosperous people.

"The sacred Scripture then asks you to remain

1. XXXIII : 70-71.
2. Any saying or an act of the Prophet.

conscious of God, in whose name you demand your rights from one another.

"The whole of human existence, the entire gamut of human activity is nothing more than a continuous demand made of one another. Whether it be government or business, education or industry, it is always a demand made by one man from the other; everyone asks the other for something and is in turn demanded to fulfil his own obligations. We are obliged to ask for one thing or the other from the lowest of the low in order to maintain the social existence; for, every man has certain rights as well as obligations to others. This is, in reality, the sum and substance of a civilized social existence. And what is the inner content of this *nikâh*, the nuptial tie? It is also a demand, nobly made and answered in a dignified way: a respectable family asks for the hand of the daughter of another equally worthy household to complete and consummate the life of its own son which had so long been imperfect and incomplete. They agree and unite the mates in the name of God. Now, two persons who had so long been complete strangers to one another, become a loving couple, admiring and adoring each other, as could be the supreme wish of any two mates. Their interests, their longings, their desires, nay, their destiny becomes one. This is all because of Allah, Holy is Whose name and Who turns that which is prohibited into permissible, tabooed into warranted, vice and sinfulness into virtue and righteousness and enables the couple to turn over a new leaf of their lives. It is on account of these divine blessings that God enjoins you to be careful of your duty toward Him. There could be no act of greater ingratitude to Him than forgetting His name and your duties to Him after achieving your ends. You have to keep up His remembrance throughout your life, fulfil your duties unto Him in future and, as He has

ordained, you have to be careful of the wombs that bare you, the ties of kinship that bind you.

"You are today entering into kinships that are entirely new to you. It would, therefore, be in fitness of things to remind you of the old bonds of kinship, which have by no means been weakened by the new one, nor the duties and obligations owed unto them have been rendered ineffectual. Therefore, you should never forget your duties to your mother in your zeal to fulfil your obligations as a husband nor forget your own father in your eagerness to please your father-in-law. Now, some of you may think: who cares for these empty sermons and who can fulfil all these duel and onerous responsibilities? But God is All-Aware, All-Knowing! He reminds you that Allah hath been a Watcher over you. He alone is the Guardian, the Witness and the Watcher who shall ever be with you, and Who is nearer to you than your jugular vein.

"The next verse recited by me calls your attention to an unplatable yet unavoidable fact. It is a prophet alone who has the courage to awaken the memory of an unpleasant thing like death on such a joyous occasion. But it is necessary that man should never forget, not for a moment, his ultimate end and guard the treasure which he would surely need in the after-life. This is the treasure of faith, the belief in God and unquestioning submission to His will. Howsoever prosperous, happy and long the life of a man may be, he has always to safeguard his faith and breathe his last in the submission and servitude of the Lord and Master. This was in fact the key to the greatness of a man whom God had blessed wfth a wholesome countenance, wealth and power, glory and wisdom. Remember the prayer offered when he was at the very top of the worldly success one can aspire. Said he: "*Oh my Lord! Thou hast given me (something) of sovereignty and hast*

taught me (something) of the interpretation of events-- Creator of the heavens and the earth ! Thou art my Protecting Friend in the World and the Hereafter. Make me to die submissive (unto thee). and join me to the righteous"[1]

" Now, before you hear the bridegroom say, "I consent," for which you have all gathered here. you should listen to the Qur'ān which says, "*Oh ye who believe, Guard your duty to Allah, and speak words straight to the point.*" It means that the bridegroom should only say that which is right, with full consciousness of the far-reaching consequences and the responsibilities devolving on him by his own words and that he should give his consent after realising the grave impact of his affirmation. The Qur'ān then proceeds further to tell you that if somebody inculcates the habit of speaking with a sense of responsibility, he would soon become trustworthy and reliable, truthful and righteous, his life would become a beacon of light for others, a shining example, and worthy of redemption and blessings of God. Finally, this solemn verse of the Qur'ān emphasises that the real success lies with God alone: it depends on the submission to the Master and His Messenger and not on following one's desires, nor, on the performance of rites and customs."

The offer and acceptance of the *nikāh* follows the *khutba*, after which dates are distributed or showered. This is also to emulate the *sunnah* (practice) of the Prophet which is still followed by the Muslims of India and elsewhere.

Misuse of Mahr

The *mahr* or the dower-money paid by the husband to his wife is an essential feature of the Muslim marriages, but the prevalent custom among Indian Muslims is peculiar to them and reflects the airiness of their manners. The more

1. XII : 101.

the amount of *mahr*; the more it is prideful for the parties and a surer guarantee for the stability and continuity of the marital tie. Sometimes the *mahr* fixed, according to this usage, is an imaginary figure which is, of course, never paid. Departing from the old conventions, people now tend to have a more realistic *mahr*. The religious law of Islam has not fixed any particular amount of the *mahr* but has left it to be determined in accordance with the social and economic position of the husband. Nevertheless, Islam favours a moderate *mahr* which should be paid outright before the marriage or at least promised to be paid later on, otherwise the *nikāh* would be void *ab initio*, reducing itself to promiscuous relationship. This can obviously be possible in case the *mahr* is moderate enough that can be paid by the husband.

Other Manners and Customs

After describing the customs relating to marriage of Indian Muslims, it appears necessary to mention briefly certain other features of their social life.

Everybody falls ill at one time or the other for no one is immune from it. The prayer five times a day or the *namāz*, as it is called, is an obligatory duty to be performed even during the period of illness. The *shariᶜat*, however, allows certain concessions to such persons. If he is unable to walk down to the mosque for offering his prayer with the congregation, he can perform it alone at his house. Similarly, if he cannot stand up, he can offer it sitting or lying as may be convenient to him. He can even offer it up through gestures if he is too seriously ill to perform it in any other manner. If he cannot use water for ablution, he may take resort to *tayammum*[1] but he has to be careful of the rules of purification, as far as possible for him.

1. A ritual method of purification for prayers in place of *wadu*, where water is not available or cannot be used.

Paying a visit to the sick and afflicted is a meritorious act in the eyes of Islam. One is, however, forbidden to remain longer with a sick person than it is absolutely necessary unless the patient himself desires a prolonged sitting. The rules of etiquette prescribed by the Traditions of the holy Prophet require that one should always keep in view the inconvenience caused to the patient or his attendants by a longer sitting during such courtesy calls.

Death and Burial

Everyman born on this earth has to die one day. The inevitable last journey everybody has to undertake is attended everywhere with rituals prescribed by usage or the canons of religion. The Indian Muslims have, likewise, their own customs and conventions, of which some are prescribed by their religion, and others, evolved or borrowed from other people of the land.

The Last Wish

Every Musalman, high or low, pious or unorthodox, aspires to die with *kalma-i-shahādat*, the article of Muslim affirmation, on his lips. This is because his greatest desire is to live and die with his faith intact in the Unity of God and the prophethood of Muhammad. In a Muslim society, everywhere, provided it is permeated with the religious teachings, even to the least extent, there is a standing convention that the people ask the learned and pious souls to pray that they should join the great majority in the state of *iman*. Such an invocation by a pious person is highly valued by every Muslim, no matter whether he is an illiterate or a sinner for he sincerely desires to emulate a man who dies professing the name of God and affirming His overlordship and praise.

As soon as the family foresees the patient at the portals of death, all those who are present at the time

exhort him to recite the ***Kalima***[1] or to keep himself busy in the remembrance of God. However if he is too seriously ill to speak or even utter these words, the friends and relatives around him begin to recite the *Kalima* or engage themselves in the recollection of God. If it is felt that the patient's throat is choked with thirst, the water from the well of *Zamzam*[2], or if that is not available, some fruit juice or sweet-drink is dropped in his mouth to provide relief from that agony. It is also recommended that the persons present at the time of someone's death should recite *Surah Yāsīn* of the Qur'ān. The face of the patient at the fag end of his life or when he has given up the ghost is turned towards the *qibla*[3].

Burial Ceremony

Soon after a Muslim dies, preparations start for the washing (*ghusl*) of his dead body and the provision of a shroud (*kafan*) for him. The shroud is always of a new white cotton cloth undefiled by any impurity and consists of a seamless shirt, a *tahband* or wrapping and a covering sheet. In the case of women, a head-cloth and a breast cover are the additional items of the shroud. The dead body is washed ceremoniously in the manner prescribed in the canon books. Although the dead body can be washed by any Muslim, it is considered preferable to entrust the job to those who are conversant with the rules of the *ghusl*. The near kins and friends of the deceased prefer to perform this last service to the departed soul themselves. However, in some places the family barbers wash the corpse while in certain communities professional washers (*gassāls*) are engaged for the job.

1. *Lā illāh illalāh* ; *Muhammad ar-rasool al-Allāh* : There is no God but God : Muhammad is the apostle of Allah.
2. The well within the precincts of the mosque of Kaʿaba.
3. i. e. Kaʿaba.

After washing the dead body thoroughly with soap and water, sousing it over and over again with copious douches of water, and drying it well, it is dressed in the shroud. Campher is placed under each armpit and on the orifices of the body, and the arms are folded across his or her chest. Those who have already performed the *hajj* usually bring back their shrouds dipped in the water of *Zamzam*.

Funeral Service

The dead body, washed and shrouded, is then brought out of the house. It is also customary to show the face of the deceased to the relatives and neighbours before it is finally covered. Now, it is the time for the funeral service, which is an act of the highest merit not only for the deceased but also for all those participating in it. The number of participants in the funeral service, however, depends on the social status and contacts of the deceased, as well as religious sense of his neighbours. The funeral service or *namāz-i-janāzah*, as it is known in India, is offered in congregation but unlike the other prayers, it has no genuflection and prostration. The worshippers stand in rows of old numbers, three, five, seven, depending on the number of participants, with the right hand of the worshippers placed on the left below navel, and led by a pious or learned person who stands a few paces ahead of the front line. The corpse is placed in front of the *imām* leading the prayer, who begins it after obtaining permission of the legal heir or the nearest kin present at the time. The funeral prayer, recited silently, has four *takbirs* which intervene between the initial *duʿā*[2] and *darūd*[3] (recited with or without *Sūrah Fātiha*[4]) and the benediction for the invocation of divine blessings on the

1. The formula, meaning "Allah is Great".
2. Meaning "supplication".
3 Invocation of Divine blessings for the Prophet.
4. The first chapter of the Qurʾān.

soul of the dead person. This, being the chief supplication for the departed soul, is given here to acquaint the readers with the type of prayer made for him.

> "O Allah ! Pardon our living and our dead, the present and the absent, the young and the old, the male and the female. O Allah ! he (or she) to whom Thou accordest life, cause him to live on the (path of) Islam, and he to whom Thou givest death, cause him to die in (the state of) *Imān*."

If, however, the deceased is a minor, then the *du*ʿ*ā* recited is as follows :

> "O Allah ! make him (or her) our forerunner and make him (or her), for us, a reward and a treasure, and make him (or her) for us a pleader, and accept his (or her) pleading."

After the fourth *takbīr*, the prayer is terminated with the *salām*. The dead body is thereafter taken out to the burial place in a bier, or a cot, and carried by constantly changing relays of four men. The Traditions of the Prophet recommend the accompaniment and carrying of the dead body as well as remaining in the cemetery until the dead body is buried as pious acts to be rewarded in the hereafter. Every Muslim, deems it his duty to carry the bier whether the dead man was known to him or not and, in consequence, there is never any difficulty in taking the dead body to the cemetery no matter how long a distance is to be covered or how unfavourable the weather is. Nowadays the dead body is also taken in bigger cities on vehicular transport owing to the long distances to be covered. Although there is no harm in it, yet the better way of carrying the corpse and also in consonance with the practice followed by the Prophet is to carry it on shoulders. This practice is still preferred as far as possible.

The Grave

The grave is got ready by the time dead body reaches

the cemetery. The corpse is then taken on hand and placed in it, the face of the deceased pointing to the *qibla*, and then the grave is closed with wooden planks and mud in a way that earth will not enter therein. All those who are present at the time help in filling up the grave with mud with the following Quranic supplication on their lips :

"Thereof We created you, and thereunto We return you, and thence We bring you forth a second time.[1]"

Having covered the grave with mud in the shape of a rounded mound, every one leaves the place but those who have been close to the deceased normally stay there for a while reciting the Qur'ān and praying for the redemption of the dead soul.

Ths Rites performed after Death

The family which suffers the bereavement is normally provided food by the relatives and friends for three days or three times. This is a custom having the sanction of the practice followed during the life-time of the Prophet, since, it is considered that the members of the deceased's family would be too grief-stricken to make culinary arrangements themselves.

Prayess for the Dead Soul

Indian Muslims have adopted several rites relating to the prayer for the dead and funeral banquet, repeated on various dates after the death occurs, which seem to have been derived from the local customs, and are not to be found in any other Islamic country. Some of the special rites performed after death are called *tīja*,[2] *chālīswān*[3] and *qul*[4] which are performed on certain specified dates with set

1. Q. XX : 55.
2. Consisting of the recitation of the Qur'ān and supplication for the dead on the third day after the death.
3. Rites performed on the fortieth day, consisting of prayer for the dead soul and a funeral banquet.
4. A death anniversary when supplications are made for the deceased.

customary rituals. There is also the custom of celebrating the *Urs*, resembling a fair held on the birth or death anniversary, normally on the latter occasion, of the pious and holy persons. The name of the last mentioned celebration is derived from the Arabic term for wedding, and has the connotation of the mystic union of the saint with God. Muslims of other countries are not conversant with such celebrations. On these occasions, the followers of the saint come to the grave of the saint, often from far-off places, for recitation of the Qur'ān and invocation of divine blessings for the departed mentor. Public banquets known as *langar* are arranged on these occasions in which everyone, the poor and the rich, partake their meals. Muslims of some other countries too organise certain functions for the commemoration of the memory of their saints, propagation of their teachings and offering supplications for them, but these differ from the customs followed by the Indian Muslims. These are also not known by the name of *Urs*.

III

SOCIAL LIFE

An admixture of Islamic and Indian Cultures

The social life of the Indian Muslims, the pattern of their family life in particular, does not present any marked divergence from the surrounding culture of the people among whom they happen to reside. In a country so vast as India is, with varying climatic conditions, economic and social differences, the culture of the Indian Muslims too is marked by distinctive features, customs and manners, like that of their local compatriots, in different parts of the country. This is a natural development, yet, the Indian Muslim culture in almost every part of the country, is also permeated to an extent with the spirit of Islam. The varying cultures of different regions have always been, and still are, enlivened by certain distinctive characteristics, ceremonies, rites and practices, which are common to all of them. These typical features also lend them a colour of their own within the local or regional social pattern. The origin of the common traits of Indian Muslim culture can be traced to the influences left by the Turko-Iranian culture, imported from Iran, Turkistan and Afghanistan and represented for quite a long period in India by the Turk, Afghan and Moghul rulers as well as the landed and military aristocracy of the time. Another streak of this culture is drawn from the post-Islam Arab culture which has always been valued by the Muslims as the ideal way of life. These two elements have blended with the Indian customs and

manners, rites and traditions to produce an entirely new and typical social pattern standing apart from all yet resembling in certain aspects to each one of these. It is, in fact, a composite culture which is neither Islamic in its true sense, nor, Iranian, Turkish or Indian. It can only be called the Indo-Islamic culture.

The Purdah System

Among well-to-do Muslims who also regard themselves as belonging to the higher strata or *ashrāf*, the *purdah* system is still observed to a great extent. Without entering into the controversy whether it is Islamic or un-Islamic or how far it is neeessary or practicable, it can be asserted that the *purdah* so punctitiously observed a few decades earlier, has now lost its rigour owing, chiefly, to the modern education and economic and social changes overtaking the country. It has been completely given up by certain 'modernised' Muslim families. The Muslim ladies who earlier moved out in covered planquins, *dolīs* and *muhafās* or completely veiled coaches and victorias are now obliged to go about in tongas, rikshaws and buses leaving aside the earlier scruples. Also, the spread of education among the girls, specially in the urban centres, has further curtailed the *purdah* system.

Even the *purdah* that used to be observed earlier in the Muslim families could hardly be regarded as complying with the Islamic injunction, if only because the prevalent custom never required seclusion from certain relatives expressly directed to be kept aloof from the kindered women. The social custom adopted by the Indian Muslims, however, took what may be called a broader view in regard to these kinships, following their compatriots, although the practice often proved to be fraught with dangerous consequences.

Purdah Observed from Women

The *purdah* observed by the would-be bride from her

female in-laws is a purely Indian custom. In certain families it is so rigidly followed that the prospective brides begin to observe *purdah* from their own kindreds such as aunts from the time they are betrothed to their cousins. No such custom is, however, to be found among the Muslims in other countries.

Hospitality and Generosity

In the well-to-do Muslim families, particularly those which are socially well-connected, there are almost always a few guests. If such families are residing in a city, they usually have a few relative students coming from the rural or sub-urban areas for higher studies. Such families more often have several dependants sharing the earning of one person. Abolition of Zamindaris and *jāgīrs* as well as the rising spiral of prices have seriously curtailed the practice but it is still in vogue among the Muslims to an appreciable extent. The merits of hospitality and generosity to be shown to the guests and the obligations of neighbourliness expounded in the teachings of Islam, the example set by the pious and religious precursors of the old and the Arab and Afghan traditions of gracious hospitality have assigned it a place of religious and moral duty in the Muslim society. The Muslims still consider it propitious to entertain and receive their guests with open arms. They also consider it a duty enjoined by religion to maintain cordial relations with their neighbours and present gifts to them on special occasions.[1]

Table Manners

All the members of a family generally take their meals

1. The rights of the neighbours as enjoined by the teachings of Islam admit of no distinction between the Muslims and non-Muslims. During the time of the Prophet, his companions used to treat their Jew neighbours kindly, despite their enmity of Islam, and to send gifts regularly to them.

together, unless there is some difficulty in it. In the cities, nowadays, pre-occupations of profession, educational needs and similar other difficulties do not allow all the members of a family to assemble for meals at the appointed time. Nevertheless, as far as possible all the members of the family prefer the practice of dining together while, in certain families, men and women partake their food jointly in separate shifts. Since the institution of untouchability is altogether alien to the tenets of Islam, the utensils used by one man while taking food or drinking water are freely used by the other. Not only that the bowls, saucers and tumblers used by one member are not avoided by others, often two or more persons partake the food from the same bowl or saucer or take whatever is left by the other. Now the modern western table manners and medical culinary directives have begun to make inroads in the equalitarian and fraternal traditions of the Muslim society.

The utensils of common use in the Muslim houses are generally spacious and bigger. The edibles left over by the guests in feasts are not thrown away but given to the servants or the poor and the needy. In Arabia, however, there being absolutely no inhibition in this regard the host and his family members eat up what is left of the meal by the guests.

Caste System among Indian Muslims

The social life of Indian Muslims shows a striking contrast between the Islamic belief in equality and universal brotherhood, on the one hand, and the superstructure of social discrimination adopted by them, on the other. The Muslims of India have, undoubtedly, developed a social hierarchy based on the birth of the individual but unlike the caste system of the Hindus, their's does not insist on a complete social segregation or untouchability nor does it stand in the way of anyone achieving social eminence or respect of the society. However, the sections of Indian Muslims who were gradually

converted to Islam from the indigenous population retained some of their social customs including the caste structure and occupations, and thus introduced the counterpart castes of the Hindus into the social structure of Indian Islam. The descendants of the Muslim immigrants to the country, on the other hand, fitted themselves in the then social structure by claiming the highest ranks by virtue of their being related to the ruling races such as the Moghuls and Pathans, or because they belonged to the lineage of early Muslim nobility as *Saiyids* and *Sheikhs*. These sections being closer to the ruling elite of the Muslim era, naturally, came to regard themselves as *ashrāf* or *shurfa*, i.e. belonging to a higher rank than others The *Saiyids* claim their descent from the Prophet while *Sheikhs* (meaning pious religious teachers) regard themselves as descendants of the nobility of early Islam. These two constitute the top-grade of Muslim caste hierarchy; and the remaining, as their name indicates, are ethnic groups who take their place after the first two. It seems that the converts from the high caste Hindus wers gradually assimilated by one or the other *ashrāf* castes as, for example, the Rajput converts to Islam generally use the appellation of *khān* with their names and the Kashmiri Brahmans are all known as *sheikhs*. The other sections of Indian Muslims i. e. the converts from the low ranking castes of Hindus generally retained their caste occupations such as those of the *Dhobi* (laundryman) *Julāhā* (weaver), *Gaddī* (grazier or milkman), *Nāī* or *Hajjām* (barber), etc. Some of these appear to have converted *en masse* : *Gaddīs*, *Julahās*, *Bhishtīs* (water-carriers) and a few other castes are now entirely Muslim while others have their corresponding castes among the Hindus. However, it is difficult to maintain that all these castes among the Muslims are converts from the corresponding Hindu castes for some of them such as *Darzi* (tailors), *Qassāb* (butchers), *Mirāsi* (musicians) and a few similar castes seem to have derived their names from the occupations taken up after their conversion

to Islam. Some of the lower castes have strictly maintained their endogamous social circle or *birādri* system like their Hindu counterparts which prohibits, on the one hand marriage outside those castes and also serves, on the other, as a social constraint for the erring members overstepping caste taboos or other moral limits under the compulsion of excommunication from the *birādri*. Disappearance of the feudal system which had kept most of the lower castes pegged to their occupations in the rural areas, the recent trend of urbanisation with the industrial expansion and the resultant changes in the socio-economic structure of the society, have combined to accelerate the breaking-up process of certain occupational castes, no longer useful to the society. Some of these castes particularly those having smaller numbers or engaged in a defunct occupation, are gradually getting merged in other occupational units of equal rank by adopting new professions or by establishing matrimonial relations with other castes. A few of such castes are *Bhatyarās*, *Dhaphalīs*, etc.

Caste Attitudes

In general the Muslims belonging to the higher castes maintain an attitude of superiority as against the lower ranks. Among themselves, they have a free social intercourse, although with varying endogamic customs which differ from place to place and from family to family. Certain families giving undue importance to the purity of blood are far more strict in contracting marriages outside their own caste, or, for that matter, even outside their own family circle. Others among the *ashrāf* ranks, however, take wives of the castes regarded next below to their own, but do not, as a rule, give their own daughters in marriage to them. It would be of interest to mention here the Muslim view of *kuf* which has the sanction of religious canons also. The Muslim legists recognise the necessity of social-equality of the matches for a happy and successful marriage but it has

nothing to do with racial superiority or social discrimination as sometimes exhibited by the higher rank Indian Muslims. The concept of *kuf* only purports to ensure that the husband should not come from such a lower social stratum that the wife or her relations should feel disgraced by the marriage. The rule places no restraint on marriages between the mates belonging even to two different races if they are otherwise socially, economically and culturally equal.

The air of superiority exhibited by the *ashrāf* classes has been limited, for all practical purposes, to the rule of endogamy and a few other social customs without any appreciable effect on the free social intercourse between the lower and the higher castes of the Indian Muslims. An interesting feature of the custom followed in this regard is the exclusion of lower caste Muslims from the ceremonial feasts of higher caste Muslims. The former, if invited, are not allowed to partake their meals with the latter; likewise, servants in the Muslim households of position and rank are made to take their meals separately after other members of the family or relatives belonging to the higher castes have taken their food.[1] On the other hand, the persons belonging to the higher castes, howsoever poor or engaged in whatever occupation they may be, can claim equality of status in such social functions with their well-to-do relatives. These customs are to a large extent, the product of feudal system under which the higher castes were generally landowners and the lower castes tillers of the soil or engaged in occupations of a socially lower order. Despite these customs, however, there has never been any social segregation or untouchability as the higher caste Muslims freely take food with the lower castes on informal occasions or when invited to the social functions of the lower caste Muslims.

1. In other Muslim countries, particularly Arabia and Afghanistan, the household servants usually take food with the members of the family.

Attitude in regard to Callings and Professions

As already stated most of the lower castes of Indian Muslims have been associated and identified with the specific trades or callings in which they have been engaged but there has never been any restriction on changing one's occupation. An occupation generally regarded as belonging to a lower caste, as, for example, the profession of a *Darzi* (tailor) or a *Dhobi* (laundryman) is often adopted by a person belonging to a higher caste without any effect on his caste status. In fact, the Muslims have never accepted the occupations as permanent and unchangeable professions of the particular castes, nor, the division of labour depending on 'caste' in the form of social classes, as recognised by the Indo-Iranian people. Nor has the caste system among Indian Muslims ever discouraged the people belonging to a lower social unit or engaged in any one of the lower caste trades or callings to adopt a respectable profession like the teaching of religious sciences or acting as *Imāms* and preachers (*khatībs*). In fact, Islam does not look down upon any lawful profession with disrespect. In other predominantly Muslim countries, particularly in Arab lands, Mecca and Madina, several respected doctors of religion have sarnames[1] indicating the occupation of their forefathers. These occupational surnames are neither held in contempt by anybody nor the persons using them feel ashamed of because of those appellations.

There is no denying the fact that the Indian Muslims have gradually absorbed numerous traits from their Hindu neighbours including their caste system but the rigour of social discrimination implied in the system was softened to

1. For instance, the *khatīb* (pulpiter) and *Imām* of the *Haram* (the Mosque of Ka'aba) has *khayyāt* i. e. a tailor as his surname. Similarly there are other learned *Ulema* (religious scholars) who use the appellations of *Hallāq* (barber), *Zayyāt* (teli or oil-presser) *Sawwāf* (seller of cotton), or *Kassāb* (butcher) and these surnames are not looked down upon by anybody.

a large extent by the egalitarian principles of Islam. The reason for this apparent complexity of social attitude of the Indian Muslims can be traced to the segregating influence of the institution of Indian caste system and the air of superiority produced by the feudal system, on the one hand, and the uncompromising teachings of Islam declaring that the whole mankind is the progeny of Adam,[1] that honour in the sight of God depends on the awe of God[2] and that no Arab has a preference over a non-Arab nor a non-Arab over an Arab.[3]

Dress of the Indian Muslims

The gradual process of Indianisation of the Muslims did not manifest itself only in the assimilation of the cultural and social traits of their neighbours and its flowering in new forms of social relationships, but it also evolved new raiments and custumes in unison with their taste and suitable to the local climatic conditions. By and large, their dress is the legacy of Indo-Islamic culture which was developed and refined by the end of the Moghul rule in India and reached its apex in the cultural centres of Delhi, Lucknow and Hyderabad where the Hindu nobility had also adopted the Muslim dress. There is no appreciable difference in the dress of Muslim nobility whether living in the northern regions or in the southern states of the country, nor the dress of the Muslims of the upper crust and middle classes shows any marked variation. It consists of the trousers of different shapes like *pyjamās*, *shalwārs* and *ghararās* with a shirt (including *kurta*) and a long coat called *sherwānī*, which is an improved form of the *ackhans* and *angarkhās* worn earlier. The caps donned are of different shapes. Those more prevalent in Oudh and Bihar are *do-pallīs*. Other

1. Q. IV: 1.
2. cf. the Qur'an, XLIX: 13.
3. *Musnad Ahmad.*

popular head-dresses among Muslims include a cap made of velvet and known as Rampuri cap, and another boat-shaped cap called Gandhi or Ajmal cap. The latter is commonly worn by the Hindus too. Turbans or *pagrees* are now falling into disuse even among the *Ulema*, religious teachers, but these can still be seen at certain places worn by the bridegrooms during marriage ceremonies. *Lungi* is also commonly worn in certain places for the convenience of working at home or in the fields, but its size and shape as well as the way it is put on differs from *dhoti* generally worn by the Hindus. In certain rural areas, however, *dhoti* is the common dress of the Hindus as well as the Muslims.

The Muslim Dwellings

The increasing impact of the western mode of living as well as emphasis on town planning in recent years is tending to obliterate the differences in the design of Muslim dwellings and the style of houses built by other communities. The houses now built with the approval of town planning and municipal authorities are, by and large, of the same type meant for renting them out to the tenents who abound in cities. However, the residential structures built earlier by the Muslims were almost always well-ventilated and spacious with a wide court but the inside view was secluded from the outside. Two other features of these houses were that the lavatories were always constructed in a way that one did not have to face the *qibla* while excreting or urinating. The Muslims are forbidden to sit facing the Kaʿaba while answering the call of natures and hence this precaution had to be taken in every Muslim country in the construction of houses. The Indian Muslim houses also had bath-rooms secluded from the public view and had a raised plateform for keeping the buckets in order to comply with the rules of ritual purification.

Decoration of Houses

If you enter the house of an average Indian Muslim, you would invariably find copies of the Holy Qurʾān in different sizes kept in a niche wrapped in cloth coverings. In certain families every member, young or old, daily recites the sacred scripture early in the morning. Decoration of the houses with pictures of animate objects having been prohibited by Islam, wall-texts having Quranic verses or a few lines by some well-known poet written in a flowery pattern can be seen overhanging the walls in almost every middle-class house. In certain modernised households, now-a-days, who have shaken off the grip of religion, pictures have found their way as decorative pieces.

Arrangements for Offering Prayers

In almost every house one would find prayer-mats or a sheet of cloth set apart for offering prayers. Women, who are normally more religious-minded everywhere, perform the prayers regularly in the privacy of their houses. The male members of the family usually perform their prayers in the mosque but some of them have to offer it up in the house owing to illness or some other inability. For such occasions as well as for the guests who might prefer to perform the service alone, a small wooden prayer-bench is also available in every house along with the prayer-mat. Everyone in the house, young or old, is fully aware of the direction of *qiblā* and also abides by the precautionary measures meant for showing due deference to the Kaʿaba, the Holy of the Holies. In certain sophisticated families a separate *lota* or jug is set apart for performing ablutions. It would not be out of place to mention here that the *lotā*[1] or the jug with a

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1. Perhaps the remark of Jawahar Lal Nehru in his autobiography that he did not find any difference between the Hindu and Muslim cultures excepting the special design of Muslim *lota*, has given it an ignominious publicity.

beak shaped pipe attached to it is in common use among the Muslims for a long time. It ensures economical use of water and, being of a bit bigger size, is very convenient for performing ablutions.

Position of Women in Muslim Society

The position of women in Muslim society has always been a far more respected and happier one, than their sisters elsewhere. Upon her falls the duty of managing the household, of cooking choice and making purchases of provisions; she holds the honour and good name of her husband in the hallow of her hand and enjoys many legal rights conferred on her by the *Shariah* or religious law of Islam. As mistress of the house, she has also to look after the upbringing of the children and their education and manners. In most of the well-to-do houses normally an old lady is engaged for religious education, specially the teaching of the Qur'ān, to the children of tender age. Children from the neighbouring houses are also encouraged to receive free education from such tutors. At certain places educated middle-class house-wives teach the Qur'ān to the girls of their neighbours without charging any fee for it. These informal schools are also a means of imparting training in sewing and embroidery and cooking to the neighbouring girls.

Respect for Age

Old age among the Muslims is not something to be despised or denigrated. On the contrary, it claims highest esteem and reverence, as a mark of respect for maturity in wisdom, and makes one entitled to greater love and care by the younger members of the family. Anybody visiting a Muslim house would not unoften come across an old man—and he may be a distant relative or the *Imām* of the local mosque—sitting on a prayer-mat engaged in the recollection of God. He would see the members of the family making

obeisance to him, saluting him in the morning and desirous of his blessings. No servant or child or an elder member of the family can show disrespect to him. Everybody deems it an honour to serve him, bring the food for him and do whatever he is bidden.

The same regard is paid if there is any old lady in the family. These grandams usually pass their time in prayers and recollection of God, invoking Divine blessings for the women and children of the family and the neighbourhood who regularly pay a visit to them for that purpose. The blessings by such old ladies are considered efficacious for warding off evil. Whether such a lady is a blood relation or not, she is affectionately called grandma or aunty.

Re-marriage of Widows

The re-marriage of the widows is neither looked down upon by Islam nor has it ever been held in contempt by any custom or usage of the Muslim peoples. The Prophet of Islam himself contracted marriages with the widows and so did the pious and learned doctors of faith, kings and grandees in the bygone ages. There being no inhibition, whatsoever, in this regard, the widows of respectable and noble families were given in marriage for the second time by their own guardians, fathers and brothers. Several such examples of Moghul princes can be cited who had been re-married after widowhood and who continued to receive the same respect by the kings and relatives as well as by the then society. It seems (as related by Khafi Khan) that during the reign of Muhammad Shah (1719-48) the then nobility began to treat the remarriage of the widows with contemptuous disrespect. They began to view the second marriage as an affront to the family honour and as an act against the fidelity of the widows towards their late husbands. Anyone who dared to get his widowed sister or daughter re-married was not only sneered at but had also to face a social boycott by his friends and relatives. The

re-married widow and her husband had sometimes even to migrate from the place. This custom had so deeply rooted itself in the Indian Muslim society that Sayed Ahmad Shaheed Barelvi, the renowned reformer and religious leader of the nineteenth century, had to launch a movement against the custom. He and his followers had to fight this innovation relentlessly. For the purpose they had even to set personal examples before the practice of re-marrying the widows was revived. It was owing to his indefatigable efforts that the widow re-marriage is no longer held in contempt among Indian Muslims as it was a century or two earlier. Although some of the widows still do not marry for various reasons quite a large percentage of them is now re-married.

The Muslim Greetings

Among the Muslims all over the world the customary, greeting, as also required by their religion too, is *assalām-o-aʿlaikum* (peace be upon you) with the reply *waʿlaikum-ussalām* (on you too be peace). In certain towns, particularly those of Oudh, one is greeted by *adābʿarz* (I pay my respects to you). This is also accompanied by the youngers bowing down before their elders as a mark of respect for them. In some places like Hyderabad, this particular way of salutation is repeated three or four times. This over-sophisticated way of salutation, known as *farshi salaam*, is replied by *tasleem*, or an expression of the wish to live long. The greetings are also followed by a handshake sometimes with both hands. On the occasion of *ʿIds* or when a close friend or relation has come back from a journey the congratulatory greeting is normally a prelude to a warm embrace.

Remembrance of God

Throughout his life the name of God is constantly on the lips of a Muslim, whether learned or illiterate, young or old. Words and phrases praising God have so become part and parcel of his daily conversation that one is

constantly reminded of the omnipotence, overlordship, bounty and munificence of God Almighty at every turn and pass. Some of these recurrent phrases commonly repeated on different occasions are:

Alhamdu lillāh (Praise be to God) to express gratitude or return thanks for kindness.

Māshā Allāh (with the will and mercy of God) on the occasion of happiness or to congratulate others.

Inshā Allāh (Except if Allah Wills) while making a promise or expressing the intention to do something in future.

Innā lillāh wa innā ilaih-i-raje'oon (We all belong to Allah and unto Him shall we return) to express resignation when one has sustained a loss.

Lāhaula Walā Qūwata illā billāh (There is no might nor majesty except in God) to express resentment or indignation.

Subhān Allāh (Glory be to God) to express astonishment at some strange sight.

Bism Illāh (In the name of God) is said before one begins to take food, and then finishes it with *Alhamdu lillāh*. Similarly, in order to excuse oneself from accepting an invitafion one says: *Bārak Allāh* (God may bless you).

Anybody who sneezes says: *Alhamdu lillāh* (Praise be to God) and gets the reply: *Yarhamuka Allāh* (God may have mercy on you). He has then to return the invocation by the phrase: *Yahdikum ullāh wa yusleh lakum* (May God guide you on the right path and help you).

Rules of Common Courtesy

Whenever someone pays a visit to a middle class Muslim household he is usually felicitated with betel-leaves. Offering of a betel to the guests is an old Indian custom which had been adopted by the Indian Muslims as early as the fourteenth century. The custom, prevalent in the monastaries of the Muslim saints and sufis, finds a mention

in the records of their discourses and biographies. Although the custom of offering betels to guests is followed almost all over India, it is more widespread in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Daccen. Oudh, in Uttar Pradesh, being more sophisticated has developed different ways of preparing the betel-leaves, as, for instance, their flowery display in a saucer, before these are presented to the guests. Small betel-boxes with fine metalwork on them and cloth pouches with exquisite embroidery demonstrate the interest as well as the refined taste of the people. Tobacco is also taken with the betels. It is prepared in numerous ways to give it varying flavours, taste and agreeable fragrance. Lucknow has been the centre of manufacturing betel and chewing tobacco, known as *zarda* and *surti* also, which is relished all over the country. The old habit of smoking waterpipes or *hukka* is giving place to the more convenient smoking of cigarettes and cigars. However, the people can still be seen enjoying the luxury of smoking the *hukka* which was once the symbol of old culture and an inalienable part of all social gatherings.

Attar and Perfumes

The Indian Muslims have always had a taste for the perfumes which has also been encouraged by the rules of *Shariʿah* and the practice of the holy Prophet.[1] The development of perfumes industry owes much to the efforts of Indian Muslims who invented numerous varieties of attar, which are renowned all over the world.

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1. The holy Prophet of Islam had a liking for the attar and other perfumes with which he sccented his clothes on each Friday and on the occasion of *ʿIds*. It is related that the attar used by him on the occasion of his last *hajj* had been imported from India.

IV

FEASTS AND FESTIVALS

The ᶜId Festivals

The two great festivals of the Muslim world are *ᶜId-ul-Fitr* and *ᶜId-ul-Adha*, commonly known in India as *ᶜId* and *Baqrᶜīd*. The *ᶜId* falls immediately after the close of *Ramadhān* or the month of fasting, that is, on the first of *Shawwāl*, the tenth month of Islamic calendar. The *Ramadhān* is spent in fasting and prayer, self-denial and restraint and spiritual and moral discipline, for a full lunar month, and, therefore, the arrival of *ᶜId* is eagerly awaited by the followers of the Prophet's faith. Naturally, the sighting of the new moon on the twenty-ninth day of *Ramadhān* provides an occasion for such an additional joy that the new moon of *ᶜId* and the crescent of twenty-ninth day have become proverbial for overjoyfulness. Every Musalman, rich or poor, young or old has his gaze fixed on the sky to spot the silvery bow of the twenty-ninth *Ramadhān*. If it is not sighted on that evening, the day following it is again spent in fasting. The crescent moon on the thirtieth day is, however, a certainty. As soon as a Muslim sights the new moon of *ᶜId*, he congratulates everybody around him; happiness is in the air, and all is pleasure and excitement. The young vie with each other to break the news first to their elders and receive their blessings. And those who have spent one whole month in the exhausting but pleasurable penance pray thus to God on sighting the moon :

> "(O Moon) My Lord and thy Lord is one. Thou art the moon of guidance and betterment (for me). O Allah! Let this month begin for me with peace and (intact)

faith and submission to Thy Will and Pleasure and with (my) ability to follow Thy Commandments."

For weeks beforehand people have been making preparations for the *ᶜId* but the night preceding it everybody is unusually busy in getting ready his new clothes and making sundry arrangements for the great occasion. The morning of the festival witnesses hectic preparations for the *ᶜId* prayer. As a token of Divine permission to take food during the day-time after a month, sweets or dates are taken early in the morning. Everyone then takes a bath and puts on new clothes if he has the means. Perfumes are also used provided one can afford it before setting out for prayers in the *ᶜIdgāh*. But all such persons as are liable to offer charity enjoined for the occasion and known as *sadqa-i-Fitr* (charity of *ᶜId*), must pay it to the poor in the shape of grains or in cash before leaving for prayers. This is a thanks-giving offer for having completed the fast of *Ramadhān*. The measure prescribed by the *Shariᶜah* for this offering is 1.63 kilograms of wheat or double its weight if it be barley. An amount equivalent to the market price of these grains can also be given in cash to the poor and needy. The measure fixed is for each individual and, therefore, it must be paid on behalf of all the dependants including minor children. Now, the prayer of *ᶜId* can be performed. It is better to offer this thanks-giving prayer as early as possible but, again, the practice of the holy Prophet has to be followed in its celebration too. Thus, in emulation of the Prophet of Islam the *ᶜId* prayer is offered after sunrise. But the time taken in making preparations on this occasion has again to be taken into consideration which means a bit more delay. Nevertheless, the prayer is offered in India not later than ten or eleven in the forenoon. It is always preferable to offer this prayer in the *ᶜIdgāh*, normally located in an open space outside the town. But the increasing distances, rise in population and paucity of time has given rise to the custom of offering the prayer in different localities of the city. Still,

the congregation in the *ᶜIdgah* is almost everywhere the largest in a city.

The ᶜId Prayer

When the Muslims take the road for *ᶜIdgāh* they chant, in lower tones, the praise and thanks of God. The practice of the Prophet, still to be followed by Muslims, was to take one route for the *ᶜIdgāh* and return by another one so that all the pathways and sidewalks were filled with the adoration and glorification of the Lord and the devotion of the worshippers.[1] As the cities have now grown much bigger and means of transport are easily available, the practice of taking different routes for going and coming back is gradually being given up.

Contrary to the daily and Friday prayers, the *namāz* of *ᶜId* is neither preceded by *azān* nor by *iqāmat* or any obligatory or voluntary prayer. As soon as the congregation is ready or the time for the prayer arrives, the *Imām* steps ahead to lead the *namāz*. The daily prayers have only two *takbīrs* in each *ruku*ʾ, one at the beginning of the prayer and the other to announce the genuflexion, but that of the *ᶜId* among the *Hanafi Sunnīs* of India is marked by four of these in each *rukuᶜ*. The *Imām* ascends the pulpit soon after the prayer comes to an end with the final salutation, and delivers the sermon of *ᶜId*. Like the preachment of Fridays, it is also divided into two parts, which are separated by a brief respite by the sermoner. The sermon of *ᶜId*, however, differs from that of the Friday inasmuch as the former is delivered after the prayer while the latter is read before the *namāz*. In India the address is normally read out in Arabic from some book but now at least one of the two parts of it are delivered in Urdu or any other regional language. This practice is being adopted to let the audience know the importance of the occasion, its liturgical rules and the demands of faith

1. The practice also served to distribute the traffic on different routes.

and its relevance to the modern times.

Customary Greetings after the Prayers

As soon as the sermon ends, the people begin congratulating and embracing each other. Indian Muslims alone take resort to embracing as a sign of affection on the occasion of *ᶜId*, for the Muslims of other countries simply exchange greetings or shake hands. The practice does not have the sanction of the *shariᶜah* either, nor of any previous tradition; and it seems to have been adopted by the Muslims of India from the prevalent custom of embracing on the occasion of Hindu festivals, particularly, *Holi Milan*, which is considered to be an occasion of gaity and meriment, festivity and fraternity in India.

On return from *ᶜIdgāh* it is customary to pay a visit to the friends and kins where one is entertained with sweetened vermicelli. Unlike other countries where guests are entertained with other sweetmeats and are sprinkled with *attar* or any other perfume, the vermicelli has become an inevitable must and a symbol of *ᶜIdul-fitr* in India.

ᶜIdul-Adha

ᶜIdul-Adha or *Baqrīd* differs from *ᶜIdul-Fitr* inasmuch as sacrifice is also offered up on this occasion. It is celebrated on the tenth day of *Zil Hijjah*, the last month of Islamic calendar, when, after performing the rites of *Hajj*, the Meccan pilgrims gather at Mina at a distance of four miles from the holy city for offering sacrifice and worship and recollection of God. Like *Idul-Fitr*, the *ᶜId* prayer on this occasion too is recited on the first day of the festival but sacrifice can be offered till the evening of the third day following it. For four days on this occasion i. e. from the morning of ninth to the after-noon (*Asr*-prayer) of the fourteenth *Zil-Hijjah*, praise and glory of God is recited after every prayer. Known as *takbīrāt-i-tashrīq*, the purport of the words recited is as follows:

"Allah is Most Great : Allah is Most Great ! None

is worthy of being worshipped except Allāh ! Allāh is Most Great ! Allāh is Most Great and All Praise is for Allah alone."

The sacrifice offered on the day of *ʿIdul Adha* has been instituted in commemoration of Abraham's willingness to offer up his only son Ismael as a sacrifice. The sacrificial offering is divided into three portions, one of it being set apart for the household consumption, another for the friends and relatives and the third for the poor and needy. The distribution of the offering enjoined by the *Shariʿah* is designed to provide a healthy and hearty meal to the poor on this festive occasion. No fasting is allowed on the day of *ʿIdul-fitr* nor on the three sacrificial days of *ʿIdul-Adha.*

International Festivals

ʿIdul-Fitr and *ʿIdul-Adha* are the two principal festivals of the Muslim world. There being no dispute about the religious sanctity of the two festivals, these are observed without any exception, in every country where Muslims reside, raising them to the level of international festive occasions. There is also no marked difference in the manner these are celebrated in different countries: at least the religious rites performed on both these days have been too well defined by the Qur'ān and the Sunnat of the Holy Prophet to allow any variation in their observance in any country, whether Muslims are in a minority there or form a majority of the land.

Other Festivals

Now we shall briefly mention a few other festivals some of which are of local importance or are observed in India alone. The usages and customs forming part of a few of these are either unknown to the Muslim world or differ from the traditional form of their observance prevalent in India.

The Prophet's Birthday

The festival of the Prophet's Birthday is celebrated on

the 12th of *Rabi-ul-Awwal*,[1] the third month of the Muslim lunar year. Of all the festive days excepting the two *ʿIds*, the Prophet's Birthday is the most important and widely celebrated festival throughout the world of Islam. The occasion is marked by mammoth gatherings in which orations are delivered on the life and teachings of the Holy Prophet. In some of the countries like India and Egypt, the principal portions of these lectures is the birth of the Prophet from which it derives its commonly known name, *mīlād* or *maulood*. The custom attending the haranguing of the chief event differs from country to country; in certain places a salutation in the honour of the Prophet is sung after describing his birth when everyone present in the *milād* is expected to stand erect as a mark of respect to the Messenger of God. This is known as *qiyām*[2]. Elaborate arrangements of lighting and decoration of the place of assembly with buntings and flags are usually made while sweetmeats are also distributed at certain places after the meeting is over. Huge amounts are wasted on these elegant decorations in India which could otherwise be utilized for more useful purposes beneficial to the community and the country at large. Many educated persons as well as religious and social organisations designed to reform social evils are, however, trying to make these meetings more effective and simple in order to acquaint the masses with the life, teachings and achievements of the Prophet of Islam. Another custom of recent origin and limited to a few big cities in India is to take out processions on this occasion. Nowadays poetical symposia

1. Also known as *Bara Wafat*, it is commonly held that the Prophet was born and also died on the same day.
2. Certain sections of the Muslims who follow the Traditions of the Prophet more meticulously and reject every custom unless backed by a confirmed practice of the Prophet, do not stand up in the *Mīlāds*. Their plea is that since the Prophet disliked the practice of getting-up in his honour during his life-time, the practice in his absence is all the more reprehensible.

or *mushairās* have become an inevitable part of the public *mīlāds* which sometimes continue for the whole night.

Muharram

Muharram is the first month of the Muslim lunar year. Before Islam, and after its advent too, Muharram has been regarded as a sacred month entitled to veneration of the faithful. Many important events occurred on the 10th of this month. One of these was the deliverance of Moses and the Israelites from the tyranny of Pharaoh. Moses and his followers had crossed over to Sinai from Egypt on that day and Pharaoh was drowned in the Red Sea alongwith his legions. It is related that a few months after his imigration to Madina, the prophet observed the Jews keeping fast[1] on the tenth of *Muharram*. The Prophet enquired why did they do so ? On being informed that it was a memorial of the deliverence of Moses and the children of Israel from the hands of Pharaoh, the Prophet said, "We have a greater right in Moses than they". So he fasted and commanded his followers to fast also. Thus the fast on that day came to be regarded as obligatory before it was made optional with the advent of the *Ramadhān* fast. Even now many Muslims given to religious observance among the *Sunnīs* keep the fast on the 10th of *Muharram*.

A Sorrowful Day

This consecrated and propitious day was, however, to witness a shameful and accursed event which has turned it into a day of mourning for the Muslims. This was the martyrdom of Husain, the second son of Fatimah, the Prophet's daughter. Husain refused to take the oath of fealty to the then Caliph Yazīd and left Madīna for Kufa with a retinue of his women and children and close relatives. As he approached

1. Fast of the 'Day of Atonement' on the tenth of the *Tishri*, the seventh month of Jewish Calendar.

the plains of Karbala he was intercepted by a vastly numerous and well-armed army of the Caliph under the command of Obeidullah, the governor of Kufa. On the morning of the fatal day (*ᶜashra*), the 10th of *Muharram*, 60 A. H. (22nd October, 679 A. D.) Husain faught bravely till the battle came to an end with the death of the last of his companions. The tragic death of Husain still awakens the sympathy of the faithlul who commemorate the memory of his martyrdom with sorrow and indignation. The *Shiᶜāhs* of India take out processions with *taziās*[1] and *ᶜalams*[2] on this occas ion and have special gatherings to mourn the death of Husain. Their mournings last till the fourtieth day of Husain's martyrdom, known as *chahallum*, which falls on the 20th of the succeeding month of *Safar*.

The *Muharram* celebrations by the *Shiᶜāhs* of Iraq and Iran, where they have sizable populations, and in Oudh, specially Lucknow, where they ruled for one hundred and thirty-six years, are quite impressive and marked by pomp and pageantry. The customs differ from place to place but they normally consist of a passion performance in the course of which more devout *Shiᶜāhs* beat their bodies and faces until the blood flows, processions with *taziāhs* and *tabūts* are takan out and assemblages are held to lament the martyrdom of Husain. These customs have undergone some changes during the course of time or have been reformed to an extent in certain places, but a greater part of the *Shiᶜāh* community still celebrates the function in the traditional manner.

The *Sunni* Muslims normally do nor participate in the passion performances and other celebrations of the *Shiᶜāhs* since they hold a bit different view of this sorrowful incident from that of the *Shiᶜāhs*. The *Sunnīs* too, of a truth, look up to the martyrdom of Husain as an ennobling example of

1. Models of the tombs at Karbala.
2. Flags, as if of the Husain's party.

indomitable courage and valour, of willigness to lay one's life for truth and justice and hold him to be a victim of tyranny and injustice but, in their view, it is not proper to give vent to one's feeling of sorrow through wailings and lamentations. They consider it un-Islamic to bemoan and cry over a past happening and, fruitless too for those whose memory these celebrations seek to preserve. In their view a more befitting way of commemorating the martyrdom of Husain is to inculcate the qualities he possessed and to stick to the path of righteousness like him in face of all odds and difficulties. The *Sunnī* Muslims, therefore, by and large, disassociate themselves from *Muharram* processions and other rites, prefering to offer solemn invocation of the divine blessings on Husain and his companions through special prayers and recitation of the Qurʾān. However, in certain places, specially in the rural areas, the *Sunnīs* too keep the *taziās* and follow some of their own customary rites to celebrate the *Muharram*.

Shab-i-Barāt

Shab-i-Barāt is another festjval occupying an important place in the Muslim social life. It falls on the night of the fifteen *Shaʿbān*, the eighth month of the Muslim year. It is believed that God ordains annually on that night all the actions of mankind which they are to perform during the year, how long shall they live and when shall they die, what shall they earn or lose and the vicissitudes of fortune that shall befall them. It is, therefore, enjoined that the night should be spent in prayer and recollection of God. Many persons also keep fast on the fourteenth of *Shaʿbān* which is warranted as a commendable act of worship. During the night people keep vigil, recite the Qurʾān, offer benedictions for their own self and the near kins, and visit the cemetery to pray for their dead relatives. The women although forbidden to visit the cemetery, also accompany the males

to the burial ground. Another custom prevalent in India is to prepare *halwa*[1] on the occasion of *Shab-i-Barāt*.

An un-Islamic Custom of Shab-i-Barāt

The Indian Muslims have somehow adopted the custom of enjoying fireworks in the night of *Shab-i-Barāt*. The display of fireworks, costing quite a large sum of money makes the festival the Guy Fawkee Day of the Indian Muslims. There being no trace of this curious custom in any other Muslim country, it seems to have been taken over by the Indian Muslims from the *Diwali* (*Dipāvali*) festival of the Hindus.

Alvida

Alvidᶜa or *Jumᶜatul Widᶜa* is the last friday of *Ramadhan* which has assumed the importance of a festive day in India. It is considered propitious to offer the congregational Friday prayer on the day of *Alvidᶜa* in the principal Mosque of the city. The people from the rural and sub-urban areas specially make it a point to visit the nearest city for the purpose. The Jama Masjid of Delhi has one of the largest congregations on this occasion when the gathering is almost as large as in the *ᶜId* prayer. No trace of any such custom is to be found in early Islam. Nor do we find it mentioned in the Traditions of the Prophet or in the writings of early Muslim legists.

Some Other Festivals

Twety-seventh of the month of *Rajab* is commonly

1. It is sweetmeat made of sugar and flour. It is difficult to say how this custom came into vogue but a legend ascribes its origin to a saint of the first century A. H., Owais Qarni, who is known for his ardent love of the Prophet of Islam. Although a contemporary of the Prophet, he could not somehow meet him. It is related that when he heared that a few teeth of the Prophet have been knocked out in the battle of Uhad, he pulled out all of his teeth. The members of his household had, therefore, to prepare *halwa* for him. There is, however, hardly any basis to give credence to this story.

regarded as the day on which the Prophet made his celestial journey to Heaven. It relates to the Prophet's heavenly journey in which he was carried by Archangel Gabriel by night upon a heavenly steed from Mecca to the Temple of Jerusalem, whence he was brought up through the seven heavens to the very presence of God. The Traditions fixing the night of twenty-seventh of *Rajab* for the celestial journey are, however, not regarded as authentic. The *Shiᶜās* too celebrate the anniversary of the birth of Caliph Ali on this very day. Another feast day celebrated enthusiastically is *Gairahwin Sharīf* when special prayers are held for the great mystic saint, Sheikh ᶜAbdul Qadir Jīlāni. Feasts are also held by certain people on this occasion.[1]

Muslims Festivals of Indian Origin

Apart from the festivals sanctioned by the religious dogma or those celebrated in one form or the other by the Muslims of other countries too, there are certain other festive days of purely Indian origin. One of these is *rajbi* when sweetened bread is cooked and kept in an earthen pot as an offering to certain saints.[2] There are also fairs—the fairs held on the first Thursday of each lunar month on the graves of certain saints, the annual *Urs* of Ghazi Mian held at Bahraich and similar other *melās* and fairs held every year to celebrate the death anniversary of numerous saints and holy men. The most important and the biggest fair of this type is held at Ajmer in Rajasthan from the first to the sixth of *Rajab* every year to celebrate the *Urs* of a mystic saint, Sheikh Moinuddin Chishti Ajmeri. The fair is attended by people from far off places within country as well as the

1. The practice is not commended by the Muslims belonging to Deoband school of thought and those who more strictly follow the precepts of religion.
2. The custom started some six or seven decades back. There are still certain persons alive who can tell how this festival originated and was adopted by the people.

pilgrims from abroad. However, orthodox Muslims who demand a religious sanction and a precedent from the practice followed by the precursors of Islam for every observance associated with religion, do not approve of these fairs and festivals. Nevertheless, most of the customs of Indian Muslims including those tending to observe these fairs and festivals with an air of gaity and colourfulness bespeak of the impact of the rituals and customs followed by their compatriots on similar occasions.

V

THE CREED AND RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCES

Unity[1] of Godhead

The eternal message of Islam is based on three fundamentals: belief in the One and Only God, prophethood and resurrection on the Day of Judgement.

Belief in One God as the sole and unassisted author of all creations is the dominant teaching of Islam. Allah is the Creator of All things, and He is Guardian over all things. His are the treasures and the keys of the heavens and the earth.[2] There is no God save Him, the ever-living, the self-subsistent fount of All being. Neither slumber overtakes Him, nor sleep. His is all that is in the heavens and all that is on earth. Who is there that could intercede with Him, unless it be by his leave? He knows all that lies open before men and all that is hidden from them, whereas they cannot attain to anything of His Knowledge save that which He wills them to attain. His eternal glory overspreads the heavens and the earth, and their upholding wearies Him not. And He is the most High, the tremendous ![3] Such is Islam's concept of God, the first and foremost article of faith for

1. Apart from oneness, i. e. being one or single or individual, the word *Unity* in English also denotes as being formed of parts that constitute a whole. Accordingly, God, the Holy Spirit and the Son of God constitute Godhead in the Christian dogma. Quite apart and opposed to this view, the *Unity* or *Tawheed*, according to the Islamic concept, recognises no partners and associates whatsoever in the Unity of God.
2. Q. XXXIX: 62-63.
3. Q. II: 255.

every Muslim. It places Godhead in a position above and beyond all limitations. God alone is the Creator and Moulder, the Bountiful and the Forgiver, the Giver and the Withholder, the Just Ruler and the Great Avenger, the Omniscient and the All-Knowing, the Master of His bondsmens' destinies, the Cherished and the Wise.

The powerful and all-embracing monotheism forms the basis of all the religious, moral and social teachings of Islam. From the principle of God's oneness and uniqueness flows His sole creating power. He is the originator and fosterer of the Universe, the fount of all life-giving grace and the One to whom man is ultimately responsible. He alone is worthy of worship and praise. The attribute of God's unity and transcendence leads on to His measureless mercy and nearness to man. Being the Most Gracious, He rears, sustains and fosters everything from its inception to its final perfection.[1] The benevolence of God bridges the gap between man and his Creator. He ordains: Pray unto me and I will hear your prayer.[2] He is closer to His creations than their jugular veins[3]. He requires no property and no sustenance from His creation.[4] Nor he needs trustees, deputies or mediators. The belief in the unity of God is accompanied and attended by a sense of impeccable justice and fairplay. The believer cannot be tyrannical, because God is Just and Merciful; he cannot be a liar or deceiver, for he has to render account to the omniscient God who knows the stealthly looks and that which the breasts conceal[5]; he cannot show partiality to anyone since all men stand equal before the Lord; and, because Allah acts in this way, the believer must imitate his Master in dealings with his fellow beings. The faith in one God

1. Q. I: 2.
2. Q. XL: 60.
3. Q. L.: 16.
4. Q. L I.: 57.
5. X.: 61.

purifies the soul of the believer from evil and wickedness for he no longer exists for himself but for all his brethren in God's creation.

Prophethood

The second article of faith on which Islam raises its edifice is prophethood or the guidance vouchsafed to man through Divine Messengers and Apostles. God has, in His mercy, provided for all the known and unknown needs of man, the vicegerent of God on earth. He has also endowed man with all the capabilities required to unravel the secrets of physical laws in order to requisition these to his advantage. A little reflection would reveal that nothing which man needs for his existence on this earth has been left unprovided. But man needs something else too: he wants to know his Creator, His attributes, the purpose of creation and the meaning of life itself, for he cannot lead a life without any purpose or direction. The continuous quest of man for truth since his advent on this earth, the disquietitude of his soul bears a witness to this fact. Then, has God left man to grope in the dark alleys of uncertainty in regard to his most cardinal need? Obviously, this cannot be so. Islam affirms that an order of prophethood has been raised by God in every age and in all parts of the world[1] to explain the true nature and attributes of the Lord and Master, to guide man to the virtuous path in the eyes of his God, and to unfold the meaning and purpose of his life on earth. But all these teachers of humanity were no more than mortals[2]; none of them shared the attributes of divinity nor did they possess any power to benefit or harm anybody save as Allah willed.[3] They were, thus, inspired teachers of humanity, the bearers of good news and warners,[4] who

1. Q. IV: 164.
2. Q. XXIII: 24.
3. Q. VII: 188.
4. Q. VI: 48.

followed that which was revealed to them.[1] Islam, therefore, enjoins the faithful to believe in all the Apostles of God without making any distinction between any of them.[2] It declares unequivocally that Muslims are those who believe and observe the teachings of Divine Apostles in thought as well as in deed[3], for the Messengers of God did bring the Truth[4]; obedience of the Prophets is the obedience of God; revolt against the Prophets is a rebellion against God[5]; and that Divine torment will afflict those who deny the revelations vouchsafed to the Messengers of God[6].

Then, Islam also tells us that the underlying thought and content of the teachings of all the earlier prophets of God was one and the same: their revelations differed only in details because of the time and circumstances in which they were revealed and the capacity of man to understand them. At last the ministry of the last Prophet put a seal on the earlier revelations. Muhammad was sent as the apostle of God for the last era which superseded the guidance brought by earlier prophets. The revelation brought by him not only included and confirmed all the earlier revelations, but it also amended, improved and perfected their teachings and vouchsafed the final version of Divine Guidance to the mankind to meet his requirements till the end of time.[7]

The Hereafter

The belief in resurrection after death and in the Day of Judgement is another essential ingredient of the Islamic creed. All the earlier prophets have demanded a belief in

1. Q. X: 16.
2. Q. II: 285.
3. Q. IV: 64.
4. Q. VII: 43.
5. XXXIII: 36.
6. VI: 49.
7. XXXIII: 40.

the Hereafter, for its denial means rejection of God as the Lord of the Day of Judgement. Nay, its denial renders the belief in God and prophethood meaningless. God is Beneficent and Merciful, no doubt, but He is also Just. He has full and unfettered authority to pardon or punish anybody He pleases. Still, justice demands that the virtuous and the sinner should not be placed on the same plane. In fact, the world with all its vices and virtues is too limited a place to requit the virtuous and evil-doers in full measure. There must, therefore, be another existence to dispense justice to both these categories. The Hereafter is thus of basic importance to a religion like Islam which demands the belief in the existence of God and His attributes, the principle of prophethood and revelation through it. Islamic creed, accordingly, not only demands belief in the world to come and resurrection of the dead on the Day of Judgement, but also warns the wrongdoers of a dreadful panelty and promises blissful joys and pleasures to the pious and virtuous. The Qur'ān says that God has not created man for nothing:[1] nor were the heavens and earth, and all that is between them created playfully.[2] Man should never think that he is to be left aimless.[3] It poses the question whether God shall treat those who believe and do good work in the same way as those who spread corruption on earth.[4] It then emphatically declares that Allah has created the heavens and the earth with Truth, and that every soul shall be repaid what if has earned.[5] And it shall not be wronged in that.

A Well-defined Creed

This is a good opportunity to review a distinguishing

1. Q. XLIV : 38.
2. Q. XLIV : 38.
3. Q. LXXVI : 36.
4. Q. LXVIII : 35.
5. Q. XLVI : 22.

feature of Islam, or, for that matter, of all the Semitic religions. Just as it is often difficult for a Christian or a Muslim to understand the flexibility of approach on the part of Indo-Aryan religions manifested in their individualistic quest for the Ultimate Reality, the Hindus, Jains or Buddhists go amiss by the elaborate dogma, the creed, canons and religious observances of Semitic religions which, to them, bespeak of their intolerance.

Every candid reader of the revealed scriptures, the Old and the New Testaments and the Qur'ān would surely be impressed by the fact that the outlook of the apostles of God has been dominated and wholly transformed by consciousness of the Lord and Creator of the World. The impact of His Person upon their thought and lives has been one of complete loyalty and obeisance to the Will and Pleasure of God, and a faithful transmission of the guidance vouchsafed to them. In all these religions it is claimed that the revealed literature is a sacred scripture and as such it constitutes the community's rule for faith and conduct. The concern or *raison d'etre* of all these scriptures, therefore, is exact interpretation of the Law with its manifold regulations and ordinances. The slightest deviation from the well-defined path chalked out by these scriptures is taken as defiance of the Divine ordinances and condemned as impious and irreligious. Islam on its part; takes extra care to maintain its originel teachings—the scripture as well as the creed and observances. It has, indeed, for this very reason, succeeded in preserving its original form and content more meticulously than can be claimed by any other religion. It might be added here that the concern of all the Semitic religions, particularly of Islam, to preserve its originality and identity arises out of their sincere belief in the truthfulness of Divine revelation rather than because of any intolerant zeal or obstinacy.

There is no denying the fact that a Muslim is committed to a particular ideology and honestly considers it superior

to all other ideologies. By the very nature of this commitment, he is forced to consider his ideology alone as rightly correct. If tolerance means to believe that all religions are right and that all finally lead to the same goal, that is, to the Ultimate Reality; then, Islam, undoubtedly, does not subscribe to their view. As already stated, it teaches that it alone is right, as declared by Qur'ān unequivocally in the following verses :—

> "Lo! religion with Allah is Islam (surrender to His will and guidance.)"[1]

> "And who so seeketh a religion other than Islam (surrender to Allah), it will not be accepted from him, and he will be a loser in the Hereafter."[2]

This attitude of Islam is, in very truth, a necessary outcome of its clear, correct and sincere thinking. It presents before the humanity an incontrovertible fact that human intellect is capable of owing allegiance to only one idealogy at a time. The following verse of the Qur'ān succinctly brings out the same truth in its inimitable manner:

> "Allah hath not assigned unto any man two hearts within his body."[3]

But this does not mean that the Musalman is intolerant of the beliefs of other people; his commitment to Islam requires him to tolerate not only other peoples' rejection of his own ideology, but also to accept it as their legitimate right to do so. Islam concedes equality to the members of all faiths; for, it declares the universal rule that "for you is your religion, and for me is my religion."[4] In another place the Qur'ān says: 'There is no compulsion in religion."[4] The Islamic law guarantees not only freedom of conscience, performance of religious rites and inviolability of the places of worship of the non-Muslims but also their right to have

1. Q. III : 19.
2. Q. III : 85.
3. Q. XXXIII : 4.
4. Q. CIX : 6.

their personal matters regulated in accordance with their own religious and personal laws. Thus, the conviction in the truthfullness of Islam does not produce a blind or unreasoning adherence to the faith or a spirit of partisanship for fellow Muslims ; nor does it smack of slightest injustice to the followers of other religions. "God commands justice and good-doing,"[1] says the Qur'ān and also enjoins that : "when you voice an opinion, be just, even though it be against one near of kin."[2] The holy Prophet of Islam has strongly condemned all chauvinistic ideas, national, linguistic and racial prejudices and the passions of hate and aggression engendered by narrow sympathies in these words: "He is not one of us who gives a call for partisanship, he is not one of us who fights for partisanship and he is not one of us who dies for partisanship."[3] Insistence of Islam on its revealed character, for these reasons, does not countenance bigotry, prejudice or intolerance to other faiths in any shape or form.

The Religious Observances

Four religious observances known as the four pillars of Islam, are incumbent on every Muslim who is a major and in possession of sound mental faculties. These include the observance of ritual prayer (*namāz* or *salāt*) five times a day, payment of poor-due (*zakāt*) once a year provided one is liable to pay it, the keeping of fast (*rozah* or *saum*) during the month of *Ramadhan* and pilgrimage (*haj*) to the House of God (Ka'aba) once in a life-time. These are the religious duties enjoined by Divine revelation. Anybody denying faith in the dogma, in one or all the ritual observances, or omitting their observance permanently is deemed to have

2. Q. II : 256.
2. Q. XVI : 90.
3. Q. VI : 152.
4. *Abu Daud.*

lapsed from the faith and the Muslim community[1].

One may not be liable to pay the poor-due (*zakāt*) or perform the pilgrimage (*haj*) if certain conditions[2] laid down by the religious law of Islam (*shariʿah*) are not fulfilled, but no exception is made in the case of a major and sensible man so far as the observance of ritual prayer (*namāz*) and the keeping of fast (*rozah*) are concerned. However, if a man is sick enough that the fast is likely to aggravate his illness or if he fears that it would cause hardship in the journey undertaken by him, he may defer it for the time being. He has to make up the omission as soon as the disability requiring its postponement is removed. The prayer, on the other hand, is to be punctiliously observed in all circumstances, whether one is in camp or on the march, confined to bed or in good health, for it should never be missed by a Muslim. As soon as the time for prayer arrives, everything is to be forgotten except man's duty to God. The only concession allowed is that if one is unable to stand, the prayer can be performed sitting, lying or even in gestures; but the duty must not be neglected, not even in the din of battle cry[3]. However, when one is travelling one can offer two *rakʿats* of such obligatory prayers as consist of four, and forgo other categories of prayers which are then to be treated as purely voluntary.

The ritual prayer (*namāz*) is, thus, by far the most important obligatory religious observance of Islam constituting the mark and symbol of a Musalman and the line of demarcation between Islam and un-Islam.

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1. For a fuller exposition of these four religious duties and their meaning and purpose see the "Four Pillers of Islam" by the author which has been brqught out by the Academy of Islamic Research and Publications, Lucknow.
2. For details see any book dealing with religious observances.
3. The manner in which prayer is observed in the battle-field can be seen in a book of *fiqah* dealing with the ritual observances.

Times fixed for Prayers

As already mentioned, the prayers are to be offered five times a day which are known as *fajr* (morning), *zuhr* (meridian), ʿasr (after-noon), *maghrib* (sunset) and *ʿisha* night).

The time for the *fajr* (morning) prayer begins before dawn[1] and lasts till sunrise. The *fajr* prayer is to be offered during this period. The prayer consists of four *rakʿats*, two of which are offered individually and then the other two in congregation. As the time for *fajr* is ideally suited for prayer, the recitation of the Qur'ān in this orison is a bit longer than that in other prayers. The prayer is preceded by a call to prayer early before dawn with the addition of a sentence, repeated twice, saying, "Prayer is better than sleep". This is a reminder to the Muslims, young and old, to get up and begin preprations for the performance of their obligation to God. The two-*rakaʿt* non-obligatory prayer known as *sunnat*[2] which is of exceeding merit, is offered before the obligatory (*fard*) prayer. No prayer can be offered after the completion of the obligatory prayer of *fajr* until the sun rises.

The time for *zuhr* (meridian) prayer commences as soon as the sun has begun to decline from its zenith and remains until an object throws a shadow twice its size.

The period of *ʿasr* (after-noon) prayer lasts from the time prescribed for *Zuhr* prayer comes to an end till the sunset. It is better to offer *ʿasr* prayer before the sun loses its brilliance.

The time for the *maghrib* (sunset) prayer commences immediately after the sun has set in till evening twilight

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1. Before dawn a streak of whiteness first appears in the eastern sky which is followed by a brief spell of darkness. Thereafter whiteness of daybreak again appears which goes on increasing till the sun is visible.
2. Any observance expressly ordained or having the sanction of the Prophet's practice.

totally disappears. It too ought to be performed immediately after the sunset.

The last prayer of the day viz., *ᶜisha* (night) orison can be offered after the time for *maghrib* prayer expires until the dawn of the next day, but it should preferably be offered before midnight.

In all, the five obligatory prayers consist of 17 *rakᶜats*[1]: two of *fajr*, four each of *zuhr*, *ᶜasr* and *ᶜisha* and three of *maghrib*. In addition to these obligatory prayers, one has also to offer twelve *rakᶜats* of *sunnat* prayers and three of *wajib*[2].

The distribution of *sunnat* prayers is like this: two *rakᶜats* at *fajr*; six at the time of *zuhr*, four before the obligatory prayer and two after it; two after the *fard* prayer of *maghrib*; and two intervening the obligatory and *wajib* prayers of *ᶜisha*. The *wâjib* prayer of *ᶜisha* is also known as *witr*.

The *sunnat* prayers mentioned here are of a class which the Holy Prophet of Islam used to offer regularly and also insisted upon his followers to perform them. Standing third in order of merit after the *fard* (obligatory) and *wājib* (essential) prayers, these too are not to be missed without some very cogent reasons.

How the Prayer is performed

Now let us see how the prayer is performed by the Muslims and what do they recite in it standing, kneeling, sitting and in prostration ? How is it begun and terminated ? There would hardly be a man in India or any other country of the world where Muslims reside, who would not have heard the call to prayer or not seen Muslims offering the prayers, but very few would indeed be found conversant with its meaning and content. Many of these persons hold

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1. A *rakᶜat* is a unit of prayer consisting of recitation of the Qurᶜan in standing posture, genuflexion and two prostrations.
2. *Wajib* is a prayer which comes next in rank to the *fard* or obligatory prayers.

even some crazy ideas about the Muslim way of worship since they have never bothered to ask about it from their Muslim friends and neighbours.[1]

Call to Prayer

Let us take the *azān* or the call to prayer first. There is hardly a city, a town or a village in India with a mixed population of Hindus and Muslims where the echo of this call is not heard five times a day. We are giving here both the Arabic words and their meanings as people are generally conversant with the call but not with its purport.

Allāhu-Akbar (four times)	Allah is Most Great.[2]
Ash-hadu al lā-illāha ill-Allāh (twice)	I bear witness that there is none worthy of worship except Allah.
Ash-hadu anna Muhammadar-Rasoolullāh (twice)	I bear witness that Muhammad is the Apostle of Allah.
Hayyā ʿalas-Salāh (twice)	Come to prayer.
Hayyā ʿalal-Falāh (twice)	Come to success.
Allāhu-Akbar (twice)	Allah is Most Great.
Lā ilāh ill-Allāh	There is no deity but Allah.

Ablution

The Muslims have to prepare for the prayer by performing ablution or *wadū* which is essential for ritual purification.

1. The writer of these lines has had some very interesting experiences in this connexion. Once, when he was performing a congregational prayer with some of his friends during the course of a railway journey, a Hindu traveller who appeared to be well-educated asked whether we meant the Moghul emperor Akbar by *'Allah-o-Akbar'* repeated frequently in the *namāz* ? Another friend of mine was asked a similar question by a Hindu professor of a certain university. These incidents show how little we know of our neighbour's religious beliefs and observances.
2. Allah has been retained here as there is no corresponding word in English. The word Allah (the stress is on the second syllable) has neither feminine nor plural, and has never been applied to anything other than the unimaginable Supreme Being.

The worshipper should not only be in the state of legal purity in his person and clothes, but he should also go through the ritual of *wadū* before performing his duty to God. For it he has to wash his hands up to the wrists, gargle to cleanse his mouth, rinse the nostrils, wash the face from the forehead to the chin bone and from ear to ear, and the forearms up to the elbows. He then passes the wet hands over the head and follows it up with the washing of his feet up to the ankles. Every act is repeated thrice. The prayers fixed for more than one time can be performed if the state of ritual purification is maintained, which, however, is nullified from satisfaction of the calls of nature, from sleep, etc. The mosques normally have arrangements for performance of ablution. It is however, preferable to set out for the mosque after performing the ablutions. In some of the bigger mosques water-taps are provided and arrangements are also made for the supply of hot water during the winter season.

The Prayer

Immediately after reaching the mosque, or after performing the ablution, if needed, one gets oneself busy in voluntary prayers, *sunnat* or a *nafl*, or engages oneself in the recitation of the Qur'ān, or else recollection of God. In any case, one silently awaits the congregational prayer to begin, for it is strictly forbidden to talk about the affairs of the world in the mosques. As soon as the *Imām*[1] takes his place to lead a congregational prayer the *azān* is repeated again, although not as loudly, with the addition of the words, 'Prayer has indeed begun ; Prayer has indeed begun'. This second call to prayer is known as *iqāmat*. The *Imām* always stands ahead in the centre with the rows of the faithful ranged behind him facing the Kaʿaba.

Now, everybody hastens to join the congregation. If need be, even the voluntary prayers are curtailed. The

1. One who leads the congregational prayer.

Imām, who is normally a religious teacher or a *hāfiz*[1] or an educated person,[2] raises both the hands up to the ears and then, saying *Allāhu Akbar*, brings them down and places the right hand upon the left below the navel. The whole congregation then follows suit after repeating the intention (*niyat*) to offer that particular prayer. This intention is essential to the validity of the prayer since Islam insists on the importance of the element of conscious will in every act of worship to God. The prayer begins with an entreaty, offered silently by the *Imām* as well as his followers which runs as follows:

"All Glory be to Thee, O Allah!
And Praise be to Thee:
Blessed is Thy Name and Exalted Thy Majesty;
And there is none worthy of worship besides Thee."

Still standing, the *Imām* follows it up with the recitation of the *Surah Fātiha*, the first chapter of the Qurʿān, either silently or loudly.[3] This is the *Surah* recited in every prayer since it contains the 'opening or essence of the Divine Writ': oft repeated on several occasions, it is the fount of Divine grace and blessings. The English rendering of this chapter of the Qurʾān is given here:

"In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.
Praise be to Allah, Lord of the Worlds,
The Beneficent, the Merciful.
Owner of the Day of Judgement,

1. One who has committed the Holy Qurʾān to memory.
2. Islam does not recognise any priestly order for leading the prayers or performing other religious functions. Any Muslim having adequate knowledge about the observance can perform it. However, the *Imāms* as well as the *muazzins* (those who give call to prayer) are appointed in certain mosques and paid for it by the community with the object of their proper management.
3. The Qurʾān is recited audibly in the first two *rakʿats* of *fajr*, *maghrib* and *ʿisha* as well as in the *Friday* and *ʿId* prayers.

Thee (alone) we worship; Thee (alone) we ask for help.
Show us the straitght path.
The path of those whom Thou hast favoured;
Not the (path) of those who earn Thine anger nor of those who go astray."[1]

The recitation of the *Sūrah Fātiha* is ended with *Āmeen*."[2] The *Imām* then recites one or the other shorter *Sūrhas* or a few verses from any chapter of the Qur'ān. The (meanings of the) two smaller *Sūrahs* are given here by way of illustration :

Time Through the Ages

"In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.
By the declining day,
Lo! man is in a state of loss,
Save those who believe and do good works, and
Exhort one another to truth and exhort one another to endurance."[3]

The Unity

"In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.
Say: He is Allah the One!
Allah, tbe eternally Besought of all!
He begetteth not nor was begotten.
And there is none comparable unto Him."[4]

The recitation from the Qur'ān having been finished, the *Imām* inclines the upper part of the body, repeating *Allāhu Akbar*, and places the palms of his hands on the knees in an obeisance to God. Everyone follows the *Imām* and they all recite: 'All glory be to my Lord, the Great' The *Imām* and the congregation stand up for a short

1. Q. I: 1-7.
2. Meaning, Accept our invocation, O Alluh.
3. Q. CIII: 1-3.
4. Q. CXII: 1-3.

while; the *Imām* reciting "Allah has listened to him who has praised him"; while the congregation responds by saying, "Our Lord, praise be to Thee". The *Imām* again recites the formula, "*Allāhu Akbar*" and falls to the ground alongwith the entire congregation with their foreheads on the ground to say, "All glory be to my Lord, the Most High". If the kneeling (*rukūʿ*) signified honour to God, the prostration (*sajdah*) reminds the worshipper that he is but dust and nothingness before his Creator and Sustainer. The worshippers now raise their heads and sit down for a few seconds, but they again fall to the posture of the greatest surrender to Allah as if the first prostration (*sajdah*) had not satisfied their hearts and souls. Each movement is marked by the recitation of *Allāhu Akbar*, while praise of God is repeated during the second prostration. Having thus completed the first *rakʿat*, the *Imām* and his followers stand up to repeat it all over once again for the second or the subsequent *rakʿats*. After every two *rakʿats* the worshippers sit down after the second prostration to beseech God to bestow peace on them and the holy Prophet. They recite:

> "All reverence, all worship, all sanctity are due to Allah. Peace be on you, O Prophet, and also the Mercy of Allah and His Blessings. Peace be on us and all the righteous servants of Allah. I bear witness to the fact that there is none deserving of worship except Allah and I bear witness to the fact that Muhammad is His Servant and Apostle."

If the prayer is to be terminated after this *rakʿat*, the worshipper continues sitting to invoke Divine blessings on Prophet Muhammad, who brought the Divine message to him, in the manner God blessed the earlier prophets.

> "O Allah ! Shower Thy Blessings on Muhammad and his descendants[1] as Thou showerdest Thy Blessings on Abraham and his descendants. Verily, Thou art the

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1. The word '*Aal*' in Arabic includes in its wider sense the followers also.

Praiseworthy, the Glorious.

O Allah ! Bless Muhammad and his descendants as Thou blessedest Abraham and his descendants. Verily, Thou art the Praiseworthy, the Glorious."

And, then :

"Qur Lord ! Give unto us in the world that which is good and in the Hereafter that which is good, and guard us from the doom of Fire.[1]"

"O Allah ! Save me from the tribulation of Hell and from the affliction of the grave. O Allah ! I seek refuge in Thee from the trials of life and death and from the scourge of Dajjāl, the false Masih."

In the end, the *Imām*, followed by the congregation, turns his face to the right and then to the left, saying "Peace and grace of God be upon you".

The prayer must be recited in Arabic[2]. Its brief outline has been given here to acquaint the non-Muslims with the manner and content of the Muslim's way of worship, for, most of them do not have even the haziest idea about it.

The Friday and ʿId Prayers

On Fridays, the *zuhr* or meridian prayer is replaced by a congregational prayer of two *rakʿats*, which cannot be offered alone. The prayer is preceded by a sermon (*khutba*) and unlike the *zuhr* prayer, it is recited aloud. Friday is the weekly holiday of Muslims when a bath of general purification (*ghusl*) and the donning of washed garments are

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1. Q. II : 201.
2. The directive that the prayer (*namāz*) should be performed in Arabic alone has been of the greatest value in preserving the original form of worship and has also saved the Muslims from falling a prey to the parochial and linguistic differences in religious observances. A Muslim can perform the prayer, thanks to its being offered in Arabic, in any mosque in any part of the world led by a Muslim not speaking his own language.

recommended in preparation of the Friday prayers[1]. It is also considered meritorious to offer this prayer in the chief mosque of the city. One such chief mosque, known as a Jama Masjid, can be seen in almost every bigger city as, for instance, the Jama Masjid of Delhi or Agra, where Muslims would be found flocking in large numbers every Friday attired in spotless dresses. On reaching the Mosque, they first offer a few *rakʿats* of voluntary prayer and await silently for the sermon (*khutba*) to be delivered by the *Imām*.

The Friday Sermon

Normally, the Friday prayer is held only in one mosque of the town but in large cities where the congregation is too big to be accommodated in a single mosque, the prayer is held in several mosques. Every such mosque has a pulpit (minbar) to the right of the central arch (*mihrāb*), or a wooden structure (resembling a small platform with a few steps) is placed for the *Imām* or preacher (*khatīb*). As soon as the preacher takes his place on the pulpit (*mimber*), a second call to prayer is proclaimed by someone standing at a short distance in front of the preacher (*khatīb*) or *Imām*. The sermon ought to consist, as the Prophet used to deliver in them, of an exhortation to follow the precepts of Islam, elucidation of the fundamental tenets of faith and a discourse on any important matter worthy of inviting attention of the faithful on this solemn occasion. The orations delivered by the Prophet on Fridays were always of moderate length but eloquent and forceful. In certain Islamic countries, particularly those which have Arabic as their mother-tongue, every Friday-sermon is a new exercise in oration but in India and

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1. It does not mean that the Muslims take bath only on Fridays. Its frequency depends, for obvious reasons, on the climatic condition of any particular place as well as the customs and habits of the people. Many Muslims take bath every day, or on alternate days, but the bath on Fridays being founded on the precept of the Prophet of Islam is supposed to carry additional merit.

other non-Arabic speaking countries the sermon (*khutba*) is normally read out from any printed collection of the Friday sermons. Sometimes the *Imāms* commit the sermon (*khutba*) too to their memory to be rehearsed on each Friday.

The oration (*khutba*) delivered on Fridays consists of two parts: the first, relating to the main sermon and, the next one, invoking blessings on the Holy Prophet, his companions and others. The two parts are delivered by the preacher with a short break in-between. The sermon (*khutba*) is normally delivered in Arabic but now the preachers have begun addressing the congregation in their mother-tongues in-between the Arabic invocation in the beginning and the end of the sermon (*khutba*).

The sermon (*khutba*) given here is indicative of the Friday sermons usually preached in India. It has been taken from a popular collection[1] of orations from which these sermons are read out by most of the *Imāms* these days.

> "(After the praise of God and invocation of blessings on the Prophet Muhammad) O ye people, accept Divine Unity (in His Being and Attributes and associate no partner unto Him), for that alone constitutes the supreme act of submission to God and the greatest piety. Be meek and crestfallen before God, for surrender unto Him is the fount of all virtues. Follow in the footsteps of the Holy Prophet (on whom be peace and blessings of God), for the way of the Prophet leads you to submission to God; and, whoever obeys God and His Apostle, he shall be guided on the straight path and reach his destination. Shun the innovations in religion, since these will lead you astray to the path of disobedience to God and waywardness. Adopt

1. It was compiled by Maulana Muhammad Isma'il Shahid Dehlavi (d. 1246/1830).

truthfulness, for veracity brings life and falsehood means death. Let charity and kindness be the guiding principles of your life, for Allah loves those who are gracious to others And never lose hope of the mercy of God, because He is the Most Merciful of all the merciful ones. O ye people, do not be enamoured of the world, lest you should lose whatever you have. You shall not quit the world unless you have had everything destined for you ; then, why this vain effort for accumulating wealth through illegal and wrongful means and by transgressing the limits set by God. Adopt legitimate and lawful means to achieve your ends and pin your faith in God, for He never disappoints those who place reliance on Him. Never be weary of supplication, as He listens to those who call Him. Always seek forgiveness for your sins as this would attract Divine blessings and increase your wealth and progeny. God says in Qur'ān, '*And your Lord hath said* : *Pray unto Me and I will hear your prayer. Lo! those who scorn My service, they will enter hell, disgraced*.'[1]

Allah may help all of you and me too to gain understanding of the holy Scripture and to benefit from the wisdom contained therein. I seek forgiveness from God for you as well as for all the believers ; you should also seek refuge in Him from evil desires and sinful actions. Verily, He is the most Merciful, the Forgiver of sins."

This is the first part of the *khutba*. The second part consists of invocation of peace and blessings of God on the Holy Prophet, the right-guided Caliphs, the members of the Prophet's household, and all the Muslims, and normally it is concluded with this verse of the Qur'ān :

"Lo! Allah enjoineth justice and kindness, and giving to kinsfolk, and forbiddeth lewdness and abomination and wickedness. He exhorteth you in order that

1. Q. XL : 60.

ye may take heed."[1]

The Friday Prayer

The sermon (*khutba*) being ended, the preacher descends from the pulpit. If he also officiates as *Imām* he takes the position in front of the congregation and leads it in a two-*rakʿat* prayer. Thereafter, the people offer a few more *rakʿats* of *sunnat* prayers and disperse to look after their business. This is also what the Qurʾān requires as it entails no obligation of a weekly rest like the Jewish Sabbath or the Christian Sunday. The Qurʾān says that 'when the prayer is ended, then disperse in the land and seek of Allah's bounty[2].'

Salāt-i-Tahajjud

The prayers of the two *ʿIds* have already been described along with the fairs and festivals. Of the other important prayers, one is that of *tahajjud* which, although a voluntary prayer, has been so emphatically emphasised by the Holy Prophet as well as by the Qurʾān for the development of conscious devotion and spirituality that certain doctors of faith have been led to hold the view that this prayer was obligatory for the Prophet of Islam. Many devout Muslims, perhaps more in India than in other Islamic countries, get up at the dead of night to establish communion with their Lord. They could be seen offering eight or twelve *rakʿats* of this nocturnal prayer, immersed in the remembrance of God, seeking nearness to Him, begging His favour and bowing in thanksgiving unto Him so as to make self-surrender and obeisance to Him the ruling passion of their life, finally culminating in love—love that satisfies the yearning of the human heart. *Tahajjud* prayer is offered in the units of two *rakʿats* each in which normally the longer

1. Q. XVI : 90.
2. Q. LXII : 10.

chapters of the Qur'ān are recited. The time for *tahajjud* begins after mid-night and lasts till the day-break.

Zakat

Zakāt or poor-due is the second important observance or a piller of the edifice of Islam. The Qur'ān has spoken of it over thirty times, along with the prayer which ranks topmost among the obligatory religious observances and described it as an insignia of submission to God.

The *zakāt* is payable by every Muslim, major and of sound mental condition, provided he owns estate or effects exceeding a certain minimum value called *nisāb* which varies for different items. In other words, the *zakāt* is payable by a believer if he owns in addition to his own requirements, various categories of possessions exceeding the *nisāb*. For example, the *nisāb* fixed for gold is seven and a half tolas[1] and fifty-two and a half tolas[2] for silver. If someone has remained in possession of these metals for one complete year i. e. these have been with the owner in excess of his requirements, he would be liable to pay one-fourtieth (two and a half percent) of it by way of poor-due. Merchandise of the same value are liable to be taxed similarly. For the fruits of the soil (agricultural produce) one-tenth of the annual harvest is payable, but a twentieth part only is to be paid if the cultivation requires costly means of irrigation. The number and kind of the cattle composing the flocks and herds determine the varying rates of *zakāt* for each category. The *zakāt* is to be paid only once a year and is spent on the poor and the needy and the tax-collectors.[3]

1. Equivalent to 37.5 grams.
2. Equivalent to 612.4 grams.
3. This statutory alms (*zakāt*) of which only the general principles have been summarised here, is one of those chapters of Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqah*) on which voluminous treatises have been written. At the time of writing these lines we have before us a copy of '*Fiqah-uz-Zakāt*' by

[*Continued on next page*]

Zakāt: Not a Tax but an Act of Worship

Zakāt, in Islam, is not a tax or a levy designed merely to solve monetary problems, but a prayer, an act of worship necessary for spiritual and moral betterment and gaining propinquity to God. Like other religious observances, therefore, an intention (*niyat*) to pay the *zakāt* is essential. The alms-given without intention of paying the *zakāt* will be as ineffective as a prayer offered without it.[1] *Zakāt* is not to be paid by the believer vaingloriously but humbly and unassumingly with dawncast eyes. One who pays the *zakāt* should himself search out the poor and the needy and thank the person accepting it for his co-operation in the performance of his religious duty. The religious ordinances relating to *zakāt* attach more merit to the distribution of *zakāt* collected from the rich amongst the poor of the same place (except in case where no such persons are to be found there). The Muslim law prohibits lending on interest. It places the two, interest and *zakāt*, in balance, one exceeding in merit and virtue to the same extent as the other engenders impiety and covetousness.

Charity and Almsgiving

Zakāt signifies merely the lowest limit of the legally incumbent almsgiving by a believer in possession of wealth and property in excess of the *nisāb*. Even after paying the *zakāt*, he still remains liable to help the poor and the needy and to spend in the way of God for all these have a share in his earnings. *Zakāt* thus marks the beginning and not the end of charity. At the same time, Islam does not recognise any particular class or caste to whom the *zakāt* or

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Sheikh Yusuf al-Qardhawi of Egypt, published recently, which covers 1131 pages in two volumes. In a book written to introduce the basic Islamic tenets no more details could possibly be given. Those who are interested to know further about it might refer to "The Four Pillars of Islam" by the author.

1. *Rasail-i-Arkan* by Maulana Bahr ul-Uloom Firangi Mahali, p. 163.

other charities should be paid as a matter of right. It has, on the other hand, permanently debarred Bani Hashim i. e., the clan and descendants of the Prophet, from accepting anything of *zakāt* or charity, and has thus put a check to economic exploitation on the basis of religion.

Rozah : The Third Obligatory Observance

Fasting (*rozah*) is the third fundamental observance, obligatory like the prayer (*namāz*), on every adult Muslim not insane or suffering from any other disability. A sick person or a traveller may abstain from fasting but he will have to make up for the omission by keeping the fast subsequently on an equal number of days in any other month. The fast lasts a full lunar month during *Ramadhān*, the ninth month of the Muslim year, in which the first revelation of the holy Qur'ān was made to the Prophet. It is a month of Divine blessings and great spiritual merit.

Ramadhan : a Month of Rejoicing

Ramadhān begins with the sighting of the new moon and brings with it an aura of spiritual bliss in the Muslim localities, mosques, hearths and homes. A spirit of rejoicing, pulsating with a new life and spiritual emotion fills the people, young and old. *Ramadhān* is, undoubtedly, a month of abstinence and self-restraint, strict discipline and self-denial but its arrival is hailed as an occasion of the greatest joy More time is spent in *Ramadhān* in prayer and recitation of the Qur'ān and the number of worshippers in the mosques increases manifold. There is also considerable addition to the *ʿisha* prayers with the sighting of the *Ramadhān* moon, but the people make it a point to finish their business well in time to join the evening and night congregations.

Tarawih

During the month of *Ramadhān* twenty additional *rakʿats*

performed in the units of two each, are offered after the night prayers. These are called *trāwīh*. This special prayer is accompanied by recitation of the entire Qur'ān during the course of prayers, i. e. after *Sūrah Fātiha* in each *Rakʿat*. Recitation of the entire Qur'ān at least once in these prayers is a must, but in certain mosques it is repeated five or six times during the month. Instances are not lacking where the *Imāms* recite half or even the entire Qur'ān in a single night! The *trāwīh* prayers normally take an hour or two but in certain places these may last till dawn.

Sahrī

It is customary to take a "down meal" an hour or so before the daybreak in order to gain strength for the fast. It is called *sahūr* in Arabic and is known as *sahri* in India. The practice has the sanction of the Prophet who exhorted his followers to follow the custom. Indian Muslims usually add variety to their meals on these occasions, if their means permit. The "dawn meal" must stop before the call for morning (*fajr*) prayer is announced. Normally, the people take care to finish the *Sahrī* even before its time comes to an end.

Fasting

Now, with the twilight of dawn appearing on the horison, the *rozah* begins with the *niyat* or intention "I intend to fast for this day for the sake of Allah in the month of *Ramadhān*", which has to be expressly repeated.

The fast (*rozah*) enjoined by Islam differs from the fasts kept on grounds of health or those prevalent among the followers of other religions. During the fast it is forbidden to eat or drink anything from dawn to dusk, and the rule is strictly observed even when *Ramadhān* occurs in mid-summer. Not only is there total abstinence from food and drink of all kinds, without any distinction, but even smoking or taking of medicines, a fruit juice or the like is also

prohibited. The fast is not broken if anything is taken unintentionally but voluntary violation of the fast must be paid for by sixty days of continuous expiatory fasting.

Zeal for Worship and Prayers

Arrival of *Ramadhān* is marked by the increased zeal for voluntary prayers and remembrance of God, and, particularly, by the recitation of the Qurʿān. Every believer keeping the fast makes it a point to recite a portion of the Qurʿān every day. The *Ramadhān* also awakens the spirit of charity, benevolence and generosity: the holy Prophet called it a month of kindness and benefaction when the merit of a pice spent in charity is increased seventy times by God.

A month of Self-discipline

Ramadhān not only combines fasting and prayer and charitableness but also enjoins abstinence from falsehood in speech and action, slander, libel, lying, lustful looks, ill-will against others, etc. All these vices prohibited by Islam become a greater sin during this month. The holy Prophet is reported to have said: "Allah does not require anybody to abstain from foods and drinks if he does not give up lying and deceitful action".

Iftār

Suddenly a cannon shot or a lighting signal on the top of the minaret of a mosque or the call to evening prayer announces that the time to break the fast has arrived. The believer hastens to his home or the mosque to take a light meal called *iftār* with the supplication on his lips : "O Allah, for Thy sake have I fasted, in Thee have I faith and I break the fast with the food that comes from Thee". Verily, the fast was kept for the sake of God and so has it been broken at His bidding, and, therefore, the believer must not have his fill unless he has offered his thanks to God for its

successful completion. He takes a few morsels of food and joins the *maghrib* congregation before taking the evening meal.

Dates are specially valued for breaking the fast during *Ramadhān*; for, emulation of the practice followed by the Prophet of Islam has an additional merit in every spiritual or mundane affair. After the whole day's abstinence from foods and drinks, the recovered liberty in the evening finds expression in the variety of dishes prepared for the *iftār* and the evening meal. Indian Muslims usually have some very tasteful myprations, specially of grams, which are not to be found in other Muslim countries.

Khatm-i-Quran

The daily life of a Muslim is adapted to a new cycle of engagements during the month of *Ramadhān*. The major portion of his time, from *iftār* to the time he goes to sleep, is taken by the night prayers and *trāwīh*, as already stated elsewhere. Every Muslim considers it his bounden duty to listen to the recitation of the whole Qur'ān at least once in *trāwīh*. For the purpose, certain persons join those *trāwīh* congregations where the recitation is completed in five or seven days and then offer these prayers by themselves. Resort to such devices is taken by the people not sufficiently strong in faith but what expedients are not managed by the indolent to meet the arduous requirements of religion and law! In India there is a custom of decorating the mosques and distributing sweets, normally on the twenty-seventh night or near about it, when the recitation of the entire Qur'ān in *trāwīh* is completed. The occasion is known as *Khatm-i-Qur'ān*.

Aʿitekāf

The Traditions assert the the Prophet used to spend the last ten days of *Ramadhān* in prayer and remembrance of God secluded in his mosque. It is naturally considered

virtuous to follow the practice of the holy Prophet. A number of orthodox Muslims, accordingly, shift to the Mosques on the evening of the 19th *Ramadhān* and come out of it after the new moon of *ᶜId* has been sighted. During this period, known as *aᶜitekāf*, one can come out of the mosque only for satisfaction of the nature's call, but *wadū* and similar other permissible acts are to be performed within the bounds of the mosque. *Aᶜitekāf* signifies that one has left the affairs of the world, his home and dependents for ten days to devote himself exclusively to the worship and recollection of God. Fasting, coupled with intensive prayer and meditation, away from the cares of the world, during the period of *aᶜitekāf*, affords an opportunity for spiritual development and prepares the worshipper to suffer the greatest privation and the hardest trial for the sake of his faith.

Shab-i-Qadr

Just as greater merit is attached to the last days of *Ramadhān*, there is a *Laitatul Qadr* or the 'Night of Power' which is 'worth more than a thousand months'[1]. The Qur'ān has a chapter named after it. Revelation from God came down to earth in the month of *Ramadhān* and more exactly, in the Night of Power[2], which has, however, not been specified by God. It might be one out of the 21st, 23rd, 25th, 27th or 29th night of *Ramadhān* but the 27th night is considered more probable. The night is spent in vigil and prayer by the orthodox Muslims.

The New Moon of ᶜId

The month of fasting and prayer, restraint and self-discipline comes to an end with the sighting of the new moon of *ᶜId*. *Ramadhān* is bidden good-bye with a heavy heart. The joy of the coming *ᶜId* mingles with the sorrowful gloom felt

1. Q. XCVII : 3.
2. Q. XCVII : 1.

for the departing *Ramadhān* and, with it, the blessings of the Lord If it was considered sinful to take any food or drink any water during *Ramadhān*, it would now be sacrilegious to abstain from lawful foods and drinks on the day of *ʿId*. The moral is clear to the Muslims: all virtue and merit, piety and sanctity depend on an unflinching submission to the Will and Pleasure of the Creator and Lord of the world.

Haj

Haj is another religious duty incumbent on every true Muslim if he has the means[1] to make the pilgrimage to Mecca Islam attaches so much importance to the institution that a Muslim is liable to be declared an apostate, in accordance with the injunctions contained in this regard in the Qur'ān and the Traditions, if he possesses the means but does not perform the *haj*. The pilgrimage is performed with certain fixed rites at Mecca, which have to be gone through from the 8th to the 12th of *Zil-Hijja*, the last month of the Muslim lunar year.

The Rites of Haj

As already stated, the ceremonies of *haj* have to be performed on the sacred precincts of Mecca and the two neighbouring places Mina and ʿArafāt on the fixed dates. These ceremonies being an integral part of the pilgrimage, and having been specified by the holy Scripture and the practice of the Prophet of Islam, cannot be performed at any other place or on any other date. The Muslim tradition connects it with the two most venerable Prophets of God, Abraham and Ismael, who, when commanded by their Lord,

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1. One has to possess not only the means to undertake the journey but should also leave enough for the maintenance of his dependants during his absence. In addition, he should be in good health to undertake the journey.

willingly laid their lives at the altar of God. It was at these places, on these very days that the father and son, with concerted will, came out successful from the supreme trial of self-sacrifice in the service of God. It was indeed a great and arduous trial to test the love and affection, ardour and devotion of the two men whose ennobling example shall ever continue to inspire mankind and inflame their hearts with the Divine love. The commemoration of this noblest sacrifice accompanied with the repetition of the rites performed by these two Apostles of God, allows the believers, on the one hand, to partake the spirit of adoring affection for God felt by them and, on the other, links them all, belonging to different countries and nationalities, in the common heritage of Abrahamic belief and culture and the way of his life. The pilgrimage, of a fact, has been the greatest factor in preserving the religious and cultural solidarity of the Muslims spread all over the world by forging a common link between them as well as with the centre of Islam, the House of God.[1]

It would be out of place to describe in any detail the rites performed at the time of *haj*. These rites are fairly long and consist of numerous details which can be seen in the writings of Muslim legists, and can be understood only by undergoing all these rituals under the guidance of the expert guides[2] known as *mutawwif*. Here we shall try to

1. The innumerable details of these rites of pilgrimage cover a larger part of the writings of Muslim Jurisprudents. It is in fact one of the most difficult parts of Muslim religious law and extensive treatises exist on the subject, some of which have been written by the Muslim scholars belonging to India. Of the most authoritative and exhaustive works on *haj*, the *Zubdatul Manāsik* by Maulana Rashid Ahmad Gangohi, the *ʿUmadatul Manāsik* by Maulana Sher Muhammad Sindhi and the *Muʿallim ul-Hujjaj* by Qari Saʿeed Ahmad occupy the pride of place.

2. It is an accepted fact that no one, even after years of teaching the subject, can gain mastery over these ceremonies and has of necessity to

[Continued on next page]

accompany the intending *Hajees* in order to give a broad idea of the way *haj* is performed.

Travel for the Pilgrimage

The Indian Muslims are known for their genuine feeling of religious enthusiasm for the *haj* and their number exceeds that of any other country where Muslims are in a minority. There is great rejoicing when the pilgrims set out from their villages or towns for the *haj*; they are given a send-off with the most distinguished marks of respect; the friends and relatives beg the pilgrims to remember them in their invocations to God at the Holy of Holies and wish them god-speed success in their journey. The elderly *Hajees* entertain a subconscious wish to die on the sacred soil of the holy cities. With this end in view, it is customary for the pilgrims to take with them a shroud which they bring back dipped in the water of *Zamzam*, to be used as a burial garment when they ultimately give up the ghost.

Engagements at the Port

At the ports of embarkation where the pilgrims have normally to spend a few days before the ship takes off on its journey, the pilgrims can be seen studying the rites of the pilgrimage. Those who are educated try to gain acquaintance of the geography and historical importance of the places to be visited by them. Normally all the pilgrims engage themselves in pursuits which may be helpful in the performance of the *haj* and in deriving the maximum benefit out of the journey undertaken with considerable cost and inconvenience. In the ships too, arrangements are made for daily discourses on the *haj*, its importance and the ceremonial rites connected with it in order to keep the

take the help of the expert guides. Often learned doctors who are deemed expert on the subject commit mistakes in the performance of these rites.

hearts of the pilgrims smitten with the love of God.

Ihrām

When the ship reaches Yaulamlam[1], a siren is sounded to inform the pilgrims that it is the place where they should put on the special pilgrim garments (*ihrām*)[2]. This is the *miqāt* for the pilgrims coming to Mecca from the north. There are different *miqāts* for people coming from different directions, the farthest from Mecca being the one for those coming from Madina. It signifies that the pilgrim should prepare himself mentally as well as in his outward appearance and attires for presenting himself before the Lord of the worlds.

The pilgrims take a bath for ritual purification and change into two seemless white sheets of cloth. The women do not have to put on the pilgrim's garment (*ihrām*) but they cannot now cover their faces until the *haj* is completed. They offer a two *Rak*ᶜ*at* prayer and express the formal intention (*niyat*) of performing the *haj*. Now they shall have to abide by all the regulations prescribed for the *haj*; the clothes they had been wearing so long are now prohibited for them; they must now move bare-headed and must not cover their heads and faces; and, finally, remain in these special shroud like clothes till the day of the great sacrifice on the tenth day of *Dhil Hijja*. Now no distinction remains: the young and the old, the rich and the poor, the white and the black are all in the same garments. Even the difference of languages spoken by the pilgrims hailing from different parts of the world is obliterated for everyone has the same song of love on his lips.

> "Here I am at Thy service, O Allah! Here I am at Thy service; Here I am at Thy service; There is no

1. The place is about one and a half day's journey before the ship touches the port of Jedda.
2. Those travelling by air put on the *ihrām* before they board the aeroplane or change into pilgrim garments at any other aerodrome.

partner unto Thee ; Here I am at Thy service ; To Thee belongs all praise, the riches and the sovereignty of the world. There is no partner unto Thee."

The whole ship resounds with the chantings of the faithful who are now lost in the ecstasy of love for the holy land and its Lord Henceforth marital relations, mutual acrimonies, insolent behaviour and abusive language—all are prohibited and shall remain a grevious sin until the pilgrim's garment (*ihrām*) is put off. The Qur'ān ordains: "Whoever is minded to perform the pilgrimage, therein there is (to be) no lewdness nor abuse nor angry conversation on the pilgrimage."[1]

Some of the pilgrims appear to be restless ; while there are others who seem to be lost to the world—in an unearthly sea of happiness. For some the travelling must have been the first journey of their life—and what a journey, towards what an exalted goal ! It had been their life-long wish to see the holy city, once, even if they had to die after it. They had always offered the prayers facing the Inviolable House of God, never slept with their feet on the side of Ka'aba nor answered the call of nature facing that direction ; and, now this goal of their life is drawing near !

The Ka'aba

And lo ! the pilgrims find themselves, suddenly, within the limits of the Haram.[2] The fast moving vehicles take the pilgrims to the Holy Mosque in no time. Now they are within the inner square of the sanctuary having a large cube of about forty feet high, covered with black brocade with a broad band of gold-embroided verses from the Qur'ān running around the upper portion of the covering. At its south-east corner, the black stone (*hajr-al-Aswad*) surrounded by a silver frame is embedded in the wall which has been

1. Q. II : 197
2. The limits around Mecca demarcating the sacred bounds of the holy city begin about 24 or 25 kilometers from the city.

kissed hallow by many generations of the pilgrims simply because this only remnant of the original House of God built by Abraham was kissed by the Holy Prophet. This is, then, the Ka'aba: without any definite ornamentation, without any structural beauty of line and form; it stands there in utter simplicity man could conceive of as no architectural beauty could he create befitting the Lord, Most High.

There is an undescribable joy when the pilgrims first see the Ka'aba, the goal of their longing. A few seem to be in a transport of delight, some shed tears of joy while there are still others who are dumbfounded as if captivated by the glory of God before their eyes. Now the pilgrims will walk round the Ka'aba seven times, kiss the black stone and offer prayers facing it from any side they desire. There are also the hillocks of Safa and Marwa, at a short distance, which still mark the places between which Hagar ran seven times in search of water for her little Ismael. Her frantic search for water was so liked by God that every pilgrim must now traverse the track, in imitation of Hagar, increasing and slowing his paces like her, for the *haj* will not be complete without undergoing this *sa'ee*.

In the Plain of Arafāt

This is now the eighth of *Dhil Hijja*. The pilgrims will proceed to Mina, some four miles out of Mecca and camp there. On the ninth morning, they will proceed to Mount Arafāt, about eight miles still further on. Here they shall fulfil the basic demand of the pilgrimage of *haj*, for this is the ceremony of ceremonies to be performed during the pilgrimage But, after all, what is this rite? Recollection of God for the whole day, repentance over one's past sins, a cry of anguish in the form of *labbaik, labbaik*, and a solemn promise to lead a virtuous, pious life in future!

The Supplication at Arafāt

We give here the supplication once offered by the

Prophet of Islam in the plain of Arafāt, and now repeated by the pilgrims to express their renunciation and self-surrender, humility and helplessness on this solemn occasion.

> "O Allah! Thou hearest what I say; Thou seest where I am; Thou knowest what I keep secret and what I express. Nothing that I do can remain concealed from Thee. I am an afflicted and helpless and a distressed soul. I seek Thy refuge for I am appalled and horrified. I acknowledge my mistakes, my sins; and I implore Thee like one forsaken and forlorn; I cry to Thee as one humiliated and abased; I call upon Thee as one miserable and crushed; I fall on my knees like one whose head hangs in shame before Thee, whose eyes shed tears, who has thrown himself at Thy feet and is crouched before Thee. O Allah! cause me not to fail in supplicating before Thee. Thou art Most Gracious and Most Merciful for me. Verily, Thou art the Best of all who are implored, the Most Bountiful of all givers."

This is the plain of Arafāt, a city of tents: no houses, no buildings; people of all races and languages clad in the all-equalising *ihrām*, beseeching God, shedding tears; sobbings and murmurings fill the air. Where acquaintances meet, they exchange greetings, people eat and drink, but all are burdened by the care to atone for their past sins and prepare for a virtuous life henceforth. The prayers of *zuhr* and *ʿasr* have been performed at their appointed times and it is now the time for *maghrib* (sunset) prayer: this orison has been performed throughout one's life exactly at the time fixed for it, but today it has to be offered late at Muzdalifah, for there is no virtue in any prayer offered by force of habit or of one's own accord—the merit lies in doing what God ordains, the prayer is for Him and all are His slaves.

Back to Mina

As soon as the sun goes down, a cannon shot announces

the warning to leave the plain of Arafāt. The tents are atonce rolled and the thronging crowd[1] moves on to Muzdalifah, at a distance of about six miles. The pilgrims again pitch their tents to take rest for the night and proceed early next morning to offer supplications at Mashʿar-i-Haram[2]. They pick up pebbles from here to cast these at the Devil (*Jamra*). This is the rite called *rami* reminding one how Ibrahim had rejected the promptings of Satan to dissuade him from sacrificing his only son in the way of God. Now they again return to Mina. The pilgrims had left it when the Master had so desired and now they again wended their way back to it at His call. Obedience of God is the essence of all customs and rituals; of a fact, the *haj* itself.

Now, the pilgrims will remain at Mina for two or three days. On the 10th of *Dhil Hijja* they will offer the sacrifice, stone the Devil again and then circumambulate the Kaʿaba at Mecca. This circumambulation is the most important and more meritorious than all those performed before or after. The pilgrimage proper is now over, and the *Hajees* wash and shave and change over to their ordinary clothes. The pilgrims must, however, spend three days at Mina. On the next two days after the *haj* is over they must stone the Devils again. No other rituals now remain and the pilgrims are free to pay social visits, make friends with the Muslims hailing from the farflung world of Islam and create the bonds of mutual understanding and common weal.

In the city of the Prophet

The pilgrims are now impatient to pay a visit to Madina, if they have not already done so on the upward journey. It is not incumbent, only meritorious, to betake oneself to

1. In the year 1972 (1391 A. H.) the number of persons present in the plain of Arafāt was reckoned as one and a half million, out of which the the *Hajees* of other countries numbered 479,339.
2. A place in Muzdalifah where the holy Prophet offered prayers.

Medina; nevertheless, who can deny that but for the beloved Apostle of God, on whom be the blessings and peace, there would have been no circumambulation of the Ka'aba, no *namāz*, no *haj* ! One is naturally anxious to make one's salutations to the greatest benefactor of humanity, offer prayers in his mosque which increases its merit fifty thousand times, see the houses and the lanes and the paths where the Prophet once lived and walked and preached, and witness the land on which are still visible the imprints of the sacrifices and achievements of the Prophet and his companions.

Having completed the *haj*, the pilgrims return to their homes. This is again an occasion for rejoicing in the towns or villages at the safe arrival of the pilgrims back to their relatives. The neighbours maks it a point to pay congratulatory calls on the returning pilgrims, who, on their part, bring some small present for all the friends and relatives. It may be a rosary, a few dates or a bottle of Zamzam water, but even the poorest pilgrim will bring back his modest little gift purchased in the city of *Bait Allah* (House of God) for all his friends.

This is how the *haj*,the fourth most important duty incumbent on every Muslim possessing the means is performed. The pilgrim is now entitled to be known as a *Hājee.* The prayer (*namāz*), fasting (*rozah*) and the poor-due (*zakāt*) are all incumbent on him as ever, as on other Muslims, but he is now burdened with an additional responsibility to prove himself worthy of the honour conferred on him by the new title attached to his name.

VI

A FEW SINGULAR CHARACTERISTICS OF THE INDIAN MUSLIMS

A distinguishing feature of the entire Muslim community, including Indian Muslims, is that the fundamental basis of their existence as a religious community (*Millat*) is a well-defined, distinct and immutable faith and a divinely ordained canon (*shari*ᶜ*ah*). Like other prevalent systems of faith and worship Islam too is a religion, no doubt, but the word hardly expresses the true nature of Islam and, furthermore, causes it to be misunderstood if only owing to its general usage for all the other faiths indiscriminately[1]. It is for this reason that instead of deriving its name from any race, clan, country or founder of the religion, it calls itself man's self-surrender (Islam) to God. This self-surrender expresses itself not only in belief in God but also in duteous obedience to His commands. It bespeaks, also, of the fundamental difference between the followers of Islam, who are called Muslims, and the adherents of other faiths getting their

1. There are certain religions, for example, Christianity which had owing to the impact of a repressive and totalitarian State in its formative stage, accepted the view best expressed by the biblical adage: Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's. This, obviously, limits the sphere of religion to a few purely religious beliefs and practices—a private affair having hardly anything to do with the social aspect of human life. The religions of Indian origin, too, seem to consist of certain forms of worship and rituals as against a definite view of life and the world propounded by Islam. The world 'religion' as commonly applied to other religions is, thus, inadequate to convey the much wider sense conveyed by *Dīn* (the Path) as Islam calls itself.

names from the founders of their religion, the place of their origin or a race or a clan. The Jews are also known as Judaists and Bani Israel. Judah was one of the sons of Prophet Jacob who was himself called Israel. Christians draw their name from Jesus Christ while one of their earliest names, Nazarenes or its Arabic form (*Nasārah*), as mentioned in fhe Qurʿān, is derived from Nazareth, in Galilee, the home town of Jesus Christ. Zoroastrians, known as Parsees in India, get their name from the founder of their religion, Zoroaster or Zarathustra. The same is the case with the Buddhists, named after Gautama Buddha and almost every other religion

The Muslims

The believers are called in the Qurʾān, religious treatises, historical books and literary compositions, either as *Muslimoon* or *Ummat-i-Muslimah*, and they ars still known throughout the world wherever they reside by the name of Muslims. As already explained, the name is a derivative of Islam, "the surrender" to Allah, embracing certain defined principles, ideas, values and criteria for the guidance of humanity. Despite their ardent love and attachment with the holy Prophet of Islam, the Muslims have never agreed to their being called as Mohammedans. it were the British who for the first time nicknamed them as Mohammedans and their religious law (*shariʿah*) as Mohammedan Law. But the Muslims' protested against the name given to them by their erstwhile rulers and preferred to be known as Muslims Certain institutions[1] which had been named as Mohammedan College or Mohammedan Conference during the early

1. *Madarsatul Uloom Aligarh*, established by Sir Syed Ahmad Khan was first known as Anglo-Oriental Mohammedan College. When it was upgraded, its name was changed to Muslim University. Similarly was changed the name of the once famous Mohammedan Educational Conference of Aligarh.

phases of British rule in India had to be changed later on under the pressure of Muslim public opinion about the unsuitability of the word 'Mohammedan.'

The Content and Form of Faith

The reason for this strong public opinion which might appear as of trivial importance to certain persons is that the form of the faifh is as important from the Muslim view-point as the content itself. The faith as well as its manifestation in the form of religious law (*shariʿah*) are of basic importance for the uniqueness of the Muslim culture and its way of life. There is, indeed, no basis in Islam for the notion that the Islamic religious law is just another code to be obeyed, as we dutifully obey the laws of a city or a state. It represents the sense of the believers' absolute responsibility to the will of God, and for that reason, it had to be spelled out in detail for the guidance of the faithful. It is, thus, not at all surprising that the Muslims are so sensitive to any talk about the so-called reforms in the Islamic Law. This is a matter of paramount importance for the Muslims which ought to be taken into account. in chalking out a course of action in any individual, social or national matter affecting the Muslims. It has also to be borne in mind that excepting for a few local customs, usages and conventions which have somehow found their way into the body of laws recognised as Mohammedan Law during the British rule in India, the Muslim Personal Law rests upon the Qurʾān, as interpreted through and expanded by the rules of Muslim jurisprudence (*fiqah*) on the basis of sayings and confirmed practice (*hadīth*) of the Prophet of Islam. To be sure, the Qurāʿn lays down the rules, sometimes in great detail, for the fundamental institutions of Muslim social life, such as, personal behaviour, morals, marriage, inheritance and economic activity. Where only general principles are laid down, these are supplemented by another authoritative source, the *hadīth*, or spelt out by the Muslim doctors of religion on the

basis of probable action of the Prophet and his companions in the light of Quranic precepts. Thus, the authority and validity of Muslim Personal Law is derived from the belief that they conform to the Will of an all-controlling God rather than social experience or rational speculation.

Inviolability of the Shariʿah

This brief elucidation of the nature of Muslim personal law would show that those laws which have been laid down in explicit and unambiguous terms in the Qurʾān and which have been acted upon by the Muslim community without any interruption so far, are inviolable and immutable. These are unalterable mandatory provisions of the Islamic Law and anybody transgressing these rules would be deemed, according to the consensus of Muslim doctors of faith, an apostata and outcaste of the Muslim community. There may be differences of opinion among the Muslim doctors in regard to the interpretation and practical application of these mandatory laws, but there has been absolutely no question, nor there is now, of any reform or change in these Quranic Laws. No Muslim State nor any elected legislative body has any right to interfere in these laws, and any effort in that direction would be construed as interference in the practice of religion.

There are, however, other laws, as pointed out earlier, which comprise matters with respect to which there was either no clear guidance, a rule or injunction available in the Qurʾān or the *hadīth* or those which fall in the category of non-prohibited matters, and which were spelt out later on by the Muslim legists in conformity with the spirit of the Islamic legal system. In these matters, the doors of difference of opinion and interpretation of the best course of action in the light of the general principles and precepts of the *Sharīʿah* as well as the changing needs of the times, have always been open in past, are open even today, and will continue to remain so in the future too. Muslim doctors of faith and

jurisprudents having profound legal knowledge and a developed sense of interpreting matters in the true Islamic spirit can interpret the rules falling in the latter category in the light of changed circumstances and the needs of the present-day life. This process of assimilation and interpretation has always been operative in the past and will remain so in future also.

Tahârat

Another unique feature of the Muslims' personal life arises out of his singular concept of personal and external purity It demands, apart from the general cleanliness, a state of legal purification too which is very often not under stood by the non-Muslims. Cleanliness denotes freedom from dirt or stain both in one's person and clothes. Legal purification (*tahārat*) goes further than that and demands that one should be free from every defilement, great or small, like excretion, urine, wine, blood, saliva of a dog, dung, etc. in the smallest quantity. Thus, however free from dirt a man may be and however stainless his dress, a speck of any defilement would render him legally impure and disqualify him from offering prayers. Similarly, if anyone has not washed his private parts after excretion or urination or requires to take bath (*ghusl*) owing to any defilement[1], he cannot attain purification without a proper bathing. The repast, utensils, table-linens, clothes, bed-sheets and all other articles of daily use should likewise be free from every defilement in addition to their being clean or free from dirt.

Dietary Restrictions

Another characteristic of the Islamic teachings having a profound impact on the Muslims' way of living is the

1. The *Shari'ah* makes a *ghusl* or bath obligatory after sextual intercourse, discharge or effusion of semon and completion of mensus and confinement.

distinction it makes between the prohibited and permissible articles of food. The Qur'ān does not leave its followers free to take whatever they like but lays down a clear line of demarcation between the two types of foodstuffs which should not be overstepped by any Muslim. In the case of animals and birds whose flesh can be eaten, they must be immolated in the name of God. The flesh of any animal that has been dedicated or offered in sacrifice to an idol or a saint or a person considered to be 'divine' or a martyr is strictly prohibited, and so is the case with the animal that meets a natural death or dies owing to injuries received in hunting before it is sacrificed in the name of God. The swine has been declared desecrate and defiled and its flesh detestable, while there are other animals which are not profane but their flesh is prohibited. Loins, tigers, panthers, dogs and similar other feline and carnivorous beasts as well as all the hunting birds and those birds which use their claws in eating fall in the prohibited category. The dietary restrictions constitute a distinguishing mark of the Abrahamic way of life: his tastes and taboos, likes and dislikes were, in truth, confirmed by God as divine injunctions to regulate the cuisine practices of the Muslims of every country and every age till the end of time. Indian Muslims too have abided by these regulations and, to an extent, more meticulously than their co-religionists in many other Muslim countries. Even now they are more cautious, law-abiding and sensitive with regard to Divine commandments than the Muslims of certain other countries whose faith has been enfeebled by an ever-increasing impact of the materialistic civilization of the West and sudden opulence. Almost similar is the case with wine which has ever remained prohibited in the eyes of the *sharī*ᶜ*ah*. The Muslims have really known it as the "mother of all evils", and never allowed it to gain a foothold in the Muslim society. In the use of alcoholic liquors too, the behaviour of the Indian Muslims has been more in keeping with the demands of the *sharī*ᶜ*ah*

than that of certain westernised Muslim countries.

Love of the Prophet

An intense attachment of the Muslims to the Prophet of Islam is another distinguishing feature of the their life. The Prophet is not simply a founder of the faith, or a venerable personage but something more than that : a tender feeling of heart-felt love and respect for the Prophet is what a Musalman treasures more than anything else. A Persian poet expressed the same feeling in these words which cannot perhaps be surpassed :

"To cut short, most respected thou art after God."

At the same time, the Muslims have been expressly asked to desist from exaggerated adulation and deification of the holy Prophet as was done by the followers of certain earlier prophets. A tradition of the holy Prophet says: "Do not extol me beyond my limits nor entertain exaggerated notions about me like the Christians who unduly magnified their Prophet. Call me, if you have to, by the name of the slave and Apostle of God".

Unparalleled Love and Affection

But, in spite of the restraining effect of moderation preached by Islam in praising the Prophet, the heart-felt love and the deep attachment the Muslims have for him is unparalleled and unsurpassed of that felt by the followers of any other religion for their prophet or the founder of their faith. It can rightly be claimed that millions of them revere and love the Prophet more than their own lives, their children and parents and are ever willing to sacrifice their all to guard his honour. The sensitiveness of the Muslims in this regard has been demonstrated on innumerable occasions and can still call forth supreme sacrifice from them. The Muslims cannot simply suffer the slightest dispargement of their beloved Prophet in any shape or form. Even today the Prophet's name, his honour, his city, his sayings and his teachings

and anything connected with him can arouse the tenderest feelings of love and fervour of devotion for him. These lines by the late Maulana Zafar Ali Khan, a poet and editor of the daily 'Zamindār' of Lahore, adequately express the ardent love of Muslims for their Prophet.

The *namāz* and the *zakāt* and the *rozah* and *haj*, virtuous are all ;
But a Musalman I am not despite these all;
Unless for the honour of Madina's chief, I gladly give-up the life I have.
By God, short of that, imperfect shall ever remain my faith !

The never ending Divine blessings invoked for the Prophet of Islam day in day out, the merit and virtue of these benedictions, the large number of the Prophet's biographies written by the Muslims of India[1] and of other countries and the eulogies composed by the poets to adore and pay their respect to him speak of the deepest love and regard entertained by the Muslims for the Apostle of God. It is worth mentioning here that the eulogium has always remained, in every language, a melodious medium to express the sentiments of gratitude to a benefactor, but the ode to praise a particular personage, for whom every poet deems it an honour to sing praises, is essentially a product of Muslim mind. If nothing similar to it is found in the poetry of other peoples, it is because no other personage has been held in a similar esteem and regard by his people. The eulogies in the praise of the Prophet of Islam in almost every language

1. It is a matter of pride for the Indian Muslims that their creations in the field of Prophet's biographies have left the Muslims of other lands far behind. In the two-volume biography of the Prophet, *Siratun Nabi*, by Allama Shibli Noamani, four more volumes were added by his disciple Maulana Syed Sulaiman Nadwi. A few other works of repute are: *Khutbat-i-Madras* by Maulana Syed Sulaiman Nadwi, *Rehmatul lil-Alamīn* by Qazi Muhammad Sulaiman Mansurpuri, *An-Nabi-ul-Khatim* by Maulana Manazir Ahsan Gilani and *Ashhabus-Sayr* by Maulana Abdur Rauf Danapuri.

spoken by the Muslims have a place of their own in those literatures if only on account of their literary merit, rhythmical creation of beauty, exquisite expression and the warmth of feeling contained by them. Excluding Iran which has had some of the best eulogist poets, the contribution of Indian Muslims to this form of poetry is without a parallel in any other language spoken by the Muslims. Some of the well-known poets of Indo-Pakistan sub-continent who have indited eulogies of exceptional poetic beauty, sublime in thought and artistic in construction, in the praise of the Holy Prophet are Mohsin Kakorwi, Amīr Mināi, Khawaja Altāf Husain Hali, Maulana Zafar Ali Khan, Dr. Sir Muhammad Iqbāl, Iqbāl Ahmad Suhail and Hafeez Jalandhri. An eulogist poet Aasi Ghazipuri has beautifully summed up the feelings of love and respect felt by the Indian Muslims for the Prophet of Islam in these lines:

"Convey my *Salām* and tell him (the Prophet), O Zephyr,
After the remembrance of God, thee alone we revere."

The Finality of the Prophethood

It is an article of faith for the Muslims that Muhammad (may the peace and blessings of God be upon him) was the last Apostle and the seal of all the Prophets. No revelation shall ever descend on a man after Muhammad, and whoever makes such a claim shall be no more than a liar and a deceiver. This faith is grounded in the teachings of the Qur'ān and the Traditions and the uninterrupted[1] belief of Muslims in this regard since the earliest times. The conviction in the finality of Muhammad's Prophethood has been a citadel of safety protecting the faith of Muslims from falling a prey to the artifices of cleverest renegades.

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1. Uninterrupted transmissian or *tawātur* of any act or saying means, in the phraseology of the Muslim legists, that it has been acted upon and handed down by an overwhelming majority, leaving no iota of doubt about its authenticity.

Companions and the Prophet's Kins

Companion is the name given to a contemporary follower of the Holy Prophet. Every Muslim acknowledges the yeoman's service rendered by each one of them for the propagation of the faith. They are all regarded as ideal Muslims, benefactors of humanity and pure-hearted souls worthy of the highest marks of reverence. Whenever their name is mentioned by any Muslim, he accompanies it with the phrase '*razi Allāh ʿanhū*' which means 'may God be pleased with him.' Four of the Prophet's companions viz., Hazrat Abu Bakr, ʿUmar, ʿUthman and ʿAli who succeeded the Prophet as his right-guided Caliphs, are held in the highest esteem[1] and their names are mentioned alongwith the Prophet's in the orations (*khutba*) of the Friday and the ʿId prayers. In addition to these four companions, there are six other pious followers of the Prophet who had been given by him the glad tidings of redemption and Paradise. These are known by the Muslims as the 'Promised Ten' (*ʿashra'-i-mubashsharah.*)

The members of the Prophet's household, known as *ahl-i-bait,* include his wives, daughters and the two grandsons, Imām Hasan and Imām Husain. Reverence and regard for each one of these kins of the Prophet is deemed as a duty incumbent on all Muslims.

The Book of God

The same is the case with the Qura'ān too. It is not merely a collection of morals and tales of wisdom, to be acted upon when convenient, but a revelation from God, preserved word by word, for the guidance of humanity. It has suffered no interpolation, not even of a comma or a full-stop, since it was revealed to the Holy Prophet. Muslims have been commanded to handle the Book reverently

1. The *Shiʿas* differ in this respect from the *Sunnis* and consider only Ali as the rightful successor of the Prophet.

and perform ablution before reciting it.

All over the world one would find a number of Muslims who have committed the entire Qurʿān to their memory. In India there are special types of schools which provide instruction in learning the Qurʾān by heart and its recitation. Thanks to these schools[1], India has hundreds of thousands persons who have memorised the whole Qurʾān and some of them have attained such a high level of proficiency that they can recite the entire Qurʾān in a single night. Actually, there are some of them who do so every night during the month of *Ramadhān*. It is not uncommon to see boys of 10 or 12 years of age who have learnt the voluminous scripture[2] by heart Nor are women[3] found lacking in this feat of memory.

Hadīth and Fiqah

Next to the Book of God, the Traditions (*hadīth*[4]) and the rules of religious law (*fiqah*) have attracted diligent attention of the Muslims. The Traditions have been preserved with an unbroken chain of narrators from the companions down to their disciples and successors till these

1. Lucknow has a fairly big institution of this type known as Madarsa Furqānia. It was established by Maulana Syed ʿAin-ul-Qaza, (d. 1925/1343) in 1908-9. Once it attracted students from such far off places as Afghanistan, Turkistan and Hijaz. Not able to maintain the same high standard, the institution is, nevertheless, still in existence. All the other oriental institutions teaching Arabic provide instruction in committing the Qurʿān to memory.
2. The Quran is divided into 30 parts and 114 chapters (*Sūrahs*) having 6,616 verses (*ayāt*) of varying length with three lakh, forty thousand seven hundred and forty words. In a book of normal size printed in 16 point type of Arabic script it covers about 800 pages. Children of even seven or eight years often commit the whole book to their memory.
3. In my own family, for instance, about a dozen women have learnt the entire Quran by heart.
4. Any saying or action attributed to the Holy Prophet and handed down by a reliable eye-witness through an unbroken chain of narrators.

were reduced into writing. A separate science for the verification and criticism of the Traditions was evolved which included the biographical account of all the narrators of the Traditions, their moral and spiritual worth, their memorising capacity and veracity. Quite a large number of books, voluminous treatises and bibliographies, enough to fill a library, have been written on the subject. The Indian Muslims too have given special attention to the science and produced some works of outstanding merit. In the last two hundred years, India has indeed been the centre of study and teaching of the Traditions, leaving all the other Muslim countries far behind. Today, no Muslim or even an Arab country can boast of the high-standard of the *hadīth* studies found in some of the Indian institutions, such as Darul Uloom Deoband, Mazahiril Uloom, Saharanpur, Nadwatul Ulama, Lucknow and Markazi Darul Uloom, Banaras. These institutions are regularly graduating students in the science of Traditions, carrying out research and bringing out valuable publications on the subject. They also have in their teaching staff certain doctors of exceptional merit and ability who could be the envy of any other Islamic country.

Islamic Brotherhood

Last, but not the least dominant trait of Muslim social life is the international brotherhood, a transcendental religious and spiritual affinity cutting across all the barriers of race, language and nationality, to which a Muslim feels irresistably drawn on account of his religious teachings. He, undoubtedly, loves the country to which he belongs; deems it an article of faith to defend its interests and lay down his life for its sake; but this does not stand in his way of taking interest in the welfare of other Muslims whom he considers as members belonging to one and the same family. This concept of human brotherhood is like a celestial light that guides the Muslims in the darkness of racial prejudices and national hatreds: it teaches them to hate

none but love all. Their interest in the affairs of the other Muslims consists of a pious wish for their well-being, a feeling of sorrow for their misfortune, and moral support to them when they need it: this is in no way a stumbling block in their way to patriotism and love for their own country. They consider it a duty enjoined by justice and humanitarian ideals, embedded in their religion and a means of strengthening and furthering the interests of their own country. Nothing bears out this assertion more clearly than the Khilafat Movement launched by the Indian Muslims under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi, Ali Brothers, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, Maulana Abdul Bari and other freedom-fighters. The wonderful spectacle of Hindu-Muslim unity and the tremendous popular upsurge for the freedom of the country produced by the Khilāfat Movement would be still fresh in the memory of many a persons in the country. The object of this movement was to restore justice to the Turks and to preserve Khilāfat as much as to liberate their own country from the foreign yoke. The same political consciousness and feeling of sympathy for the Muslims of other countries has been responsible for the keen interest shown by the Indian Muslims in the Palestine problem. There is no denying of this concern of Muslims for the humanity at large, and their co-religionists in particular: it is a characteristic of the message of Islam which must be taken into account for a better understanding of the Muslims' attitude and behaviour.

THE END